

School of Theology at Claremont



10011430190

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

ROSS L. FINNEY



The Library
of the
School of Theology
at Claremont

1325 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711

FROM THE LIBRARY OF
NORMAN L. CONARD

38
56
B

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

By

ROSS L. FINNEY, PH. D.

*Professor of Philosophy and Economics in
Illinois Wesleyan University*



Cincinnati:
JENNINGS AND GRAHAM

New York:
EATON AND MAINS

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

Copyright, 1913, by
Jennings and Graham

Contents

| Chapter | | Page |
|---------|---|------|
| I. | THE SOCIAL IDEALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, - | 9 |
| II. | THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL MORALS, - | 33 |
| III. | SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY BEGINS AT HOME, - | 49 |
| IV. | THE SOCIAL HARVEST OF MATERIALISM, | 65 |
| V. | THE SOCIAL FRUITS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE, - | 81 |
| VI. | THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF SELF-DENIAL, | 97 |
| VII. | THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH, | 111 |
| VIII. | THE SOCIAL NEED OF A RELIGIOUS AWAKENING, - | 133 |

Preface

THE object of this little book is to harmonize the divergent tendencies of personal religion and social religion, to show that they are not at all antagonistic, but mutually supplementary; to make it clear that we need the ideals and ends emphasized by the social awakening to motivate our personal religion, and that the social awakening needs the emotions and enthusiasms of personal religion to vitalize it.

We need the insight to discern that personal salvation is a vital requisite to social salvation; and that, if the social hopes of the present age are to be realized, a revival of personal religion must sweep through our civilization.

Ross L. FINNEY.

*Bloomington, Illinois,
August, 1913.*

I

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

THE Hebrews were, in many respects, a unique people; and just because they were unique they made an invaluable contribution to civilization. The respect in which they were unique was religion, and it was their religion that furnished the basis of their contribution to the future. And one of the characteristics of their peculiar religion was that they looked for a golden age in the future. The Greeks, on the other hand, and indeed all other ancient peoples, thought of the golden age as in the past. But this Hebrew idea, that the golden age, the ideal age, is in the future, runs like a golden thread through all their religious literature, is a determining fact in their history, and is one of the most important elements of their contribution to the future.

That golden age which they dreamed of in the future they called the Kingdom of God. Into that ideal of the Kingdom which was to come they gathered together all the good things they could conceive of. Devoutly, reverently, almost passionately they

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

expected them all to be realized when the Kingdom of God should be established upon earth. It was to be set up with its capital at Jerusalem. Its King was to be a scion of the house of David. All their enemies were to be expelled, all their social ills eradicated. It was to be indeed an ideal kingdom upon earth, a veritable religious Utopia.

This message is sounded forth by all their prophets. Not one of them but makes the Messianic Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, a vital note in his message and uses it as a motive in all his preaching. It was the goal of their history, the inspiration of their faith, the very center of their theocratic national religion.

And this phrase, "the Kingdom of God," Jesus seized upon to use as a vehicle for His message.

Every one who lived in Jesus' time was familiar with the term and knew full well all the hope that was expressed in it. At this time, perhaps more than at any other period of Hebrew history, there was a passionate longing in the hearts of all the people for the realization of the Kingdom. With them it merged the enthusiasm and earnestness that we feel in both patriotism and religion, for religion was always patriotic with the Jew, and patriotism was always religious. And so the Kingdom-hope was

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

the passion of the age in which Jesus pronounced His message. It was for this reason that He seized upon the term to use it as a vehicle for the expression of what He had to teach.

But He differed from the Hebrews as to how the Kingdom was to be realized. He meant to indorse their belief that when the Kingdom should come, all conceivable good things should be realized in the world, all social and political ills should be at an end, and the world should be, indeed, an ideal place to live in. All that He intended to indorse. But He took issue with them as to how the Kingdom of God was to come. The Pharisees believed that men could do nothing to hasten its coming, but that it would come in God's good time, and come because He should perform some wonderful miracle and set it up upon earth. The Zealots, on the other hand, believed, to use Ben Franklin's phrase, that "God helps them that help themselves." They were for demonstrating their fitness for the Kingdom by driving out the Romans; and then they believed the Kingdom of God would be sent. But Jesus indorsed neither of these methods of bringing in the Kingdom of God. He definitely repudiated the methods advocated by the Zealots, and gave little encouragement to the ideas that the Pharisees held as to how

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

the Kingdom of God should come. He said, to paraphrase His words, "Change your lives, be good and just, love God and man; behold, the Kingdom is already among you; believe this good news, and it will be here."

When we come to understand the message of Jesus, therefore, we discern clearly that it was not only a message of personal salvation, but a message of social salvation as well. He looked forward to and taught His disciples to pray for the time when the Kingdom of God should come, the will of God be done upon earth as it is done in heaven, and the whole world should become a veritable heaven upon earth. He taught His disciples that this Kingdom of Heaven was to grow like the seed of a plant, till it should shelter the whole earth. He taught His disciples that the Kingdom of God was like yeast put into the world, that ultimately it may leaven the whole lump. This was the sublimest Utopian dream of all the ages; and in His devotion to this dream, this social ideal, He was willing to die rather than retract one word of His program, one iota of the means for realizing it. Thus He voiced more clearly than any other of the Hebrews this hope that the world is gradually to grow better and better until it approximates the ideal condition.

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

His disciples adopted His view as a matter of course, but it may well be doubted whether they appreciated its full significance. There seems to be some indication in the New Testament that, owing to some extent to the influence of the Pharisees, they expected it to come in some sort of marvelous manifestation. And Paul, it is certain, looked for an apocalyptic Kingdom when, at the recoming of Jesus, amidst a miraculous display in the heavens above and the earth beneath, the world should come to an end and a new age should dawn. The early Christians, moreover, were actuated in a great degree by this expectation of the world's betterment or the world's end; and the early literature is full of it. But little by little it faded away as a social ideal, becoming only a millennial dream. Pagan practices were decaying and decomposing the institutions of the time. Civilization was hopelessly decadent, and after a century or two Christians came to despair of transforming and transfiguring the world that now is. And then, too, the philosophy of Plato, which little by little had been woven into theology, withdrew Christian life and hope from the world, instead of trying to save it. And so it came about that Christians set up their monasteries, lived their Christian lives apart from the world, re-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

signed themselves to the decay and decadence of the age, and comforted themselves with the hope only of their own personal salvation in the spiritual world beyond the grave, and with the dream of a distant millennium. Thus social Christianity was forgotten, and only the immortal hope and the millennial dream remained. The Kingdom-hope lay crushed under the débris of Roman civilization, smothered in the abstractions of a Platonized theology. True, there were those in all ages in whose hearts burned the desire to make the world better, and instinctively individuals and the Church felt its irrepressible motivation at times; but so far as its explicit expression in the creeds or its overt avowal as a Christian motive are concerned, it lay buried for centuries.

It is only recently, in the closing years of the nineteenth century and in the beginning years of the twentieth century, that the full gospel, in both its aspects, the individual and the social, is being set forth again, to the inspiration of men's souls. The slogan "Back to Jesus" is restoring it to us, or rather is an expression of its restoration to us. The Kingdom-hope is here among us again in all its early Christian grandeur, inspiring the souls of our youth as they could be inspired in this age by no other motive whatsoever.

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

There are various reasons why it is revived in this twentieth century. In the first place it is due to the rise of democracy. Aristotle taught that the lower classes are as much below the higher classes of men as the brutes are below human beings. But Jesus taught the brotherhood of man. Nevertheless the world believed Aristotle rather than Jesus for many sad and dreary centuries, until Rousseau proclaimed the principle that "all men are created free and equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The insight of this great idea threw all Europe into political ferment, set in motion movements of modern democracy in Europe and America, and got itself cast in the form just quoted in our great National document. And so democracy has emphasized the fact, as it was not emphasized for centuries, that the brotherhood of man is true and that Christian principles ought to reign in the realm of government, and therefore must reign and shall reign. Democracy has taught us that "a man's a man for a' that;" that the brotherhood of man, as taught by Jesus, is to fill the earth, and that the kingdoms of this earth are to become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

Within the last few years the Christian Church

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

itself has caught the inspiration from rising democracy and is voicing forth the message of humanity. The change has come about in this way. In the eighties Tolstoi startled Western civilization with the assertion that our institutions are based upon force and retaliation rather than upon love and forgiveness. He challenged us, therefore, to Christianize our institutions. That set the world to inquiring, as it had never inquired before, what the application of Christianity to our institutions—political, social, and industrial—might mean. Then Ruskin voiced a similar message, and the world listened to both of these great literary prophets of social religion.

About twenty years ago, perhaps a little more, there began to appear in America a series of books of great religious significance. The first of these was "Applied Christianity," by Washington Gladden. He called for the application of the golden rule to the labor problem. In the nineties other books appeared. The first of these was a book by Professor Ely, of the University of Wisconsin, on the "Social Aspects of Christianity." In this book, which, by the way, was prescribed for the required reading of young ministers of a great denomination, Professor Ely applied the principles of Christianity

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

not only to the labor problem, but to various other problems of our economic life. How that book set the young ministers of America to thinking as to what Christianity means to the world as well as to the individual! Next came Peabody's "Jesus Christ and the Social Question" and Shailer Mathews' "The Social Teachings of Jesus." There is hardly a clergyman in America who has not read some one of these books. But the book of all books that startled the clergy is the one by Rauschenbusch, published in 1907, entitled, "Christianity and the Social Crisis." Young ministers of America read the book with pulsing hearts, so intense was the excitement of their inspiration as they saw what Christianity might do for this old world if it were but freed from the handicaps of dogmatism and ecclesiasticism, and set free to exert its influence upon the institutions of life and society.

Thus the clergy have been awakened, and they in turn have awakened the laity. As a result the thought of Christians is aflame with these prophetic messages, and the social application of Christianity has become almost a passion.

But this passion is to be found not only in the hearts and souls of the clergy and those who listen to the clergy, but it appears also in many contempo-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

raneous phases of our National life. There never was a time in all the history of the world when there were being so many enterprises and institutions inaugurated for the benefit of humanity, for the amelioration of the conditions of human life, as to-day. Any man or woman who remembers back as far as the Civil War could make a list of not less than one hundred institutions, organizations, and enterprises that have been started since then for the sole purpose of bettering the world and benefiting humanity, increasing justice, and ameliorating the conditions of mankind.

The development of the sciences of Economics and Sociology, moreover, and the activities of philanthropy at the dictate of these sciences, is a manifestation of the passion engendered in the minds of all the people by the Kingdom-hope. There are thousands of young men who have gone into these lines of study, research, and work, instead of into the ministry, but have gone into them with precisely the same spirit as their fathers went into the ministry. And there are thousands of men who have never thought of the ministry as a profession who with a noble enthusiasm are devoting their lives to these different forms of activity for the betterment of humanity and the uplift of mankind. The pas-

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

sion even threatens to sweep over into the field of politics, and we have the spectacle of "Social Justice," a new term coined to express this humanitarian spirit of the age, becoming the campaign slogan of a great political party.

The spirit of the age, then, is Christian, in this sense, at least. Men's religious fervor is moved by this great desire, this exalted purpose of making the world better. All men are praying, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Some of them, perhaps, may not realize that their work for human betterment is Christian, that their aspirations and their ambitions are Christian, however Christian they may be. Would it not be well to let them understand that their work is a contribution to the Kingdom of God upon earth, and that their lives are really Christian in their activities and motives? Why should not a class of students, studying the great problems of modern life—problems the solution of which will bring to the world a larger measure of justice, enlarge the opportunities of childhood, widen the outlook of womanhood, and bless the world—why should they not come to such a classroom with as religious an enthusiasm as they come to the prayer-meeting? And is it unfitting that after a course devoted to

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

the study of such subjects as Poverty, its causes and cure; Crime, the forces that generate it; the Labor Movement, and the justice and injustice involved in it; the Trust Problem, and the burden that is unjustly laid upon the shoulders of so large a proportion of our population, they should reverently thank God that they have learned how the keenest minds of the age propose to realize in larger measure the Kingdom of God in the earth?

The Church, reformers, students, philanthropists, men of the world, statesmen, are all working together in this wonderful age of ours to transform and transfigure the world. We all come to feel that it is not enough to save our individual selves from some hell that threatens us hereafter; we also want to save this old world itself from the hell that has blighted it for centuries, and bring to actuality a heaven upon earth. The forces that are operating in this world of ours, religious and otherwise, making for this consummation, are powerful forces indeed; and those who understand the signs of the times are confident that we are just upon the dawn of a new and larger era, when the institutions of this world—political, social, and economic—shall be transformed so that we shall in larger measure at least actualize and exemplify the Golden Rule.

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

For there are two kinds of justice, two kinds of righteousness. There are hand-made justice and righteousness, and there are machine-made justice and righteousness. In an age like ours, when so many things are made by machinery, it ought to be easy for us to discern that justice or injustice, righteousness or unrighteousness, may be machine-made. Business corporations, municipal governments, penal institutions, educational systems, public-service franchises, legal precedents, tariff schedules, fiscal constitutions, city slums, competitive industry, and other social, political, and economic organizations are all great machines, producing justice or injustice.

It is not enough, therefore, that individuals should do right; it is also necessary that our machinery of society should be converted, and that all our institutions should either practice righteousness or else cease to exist as institutions. We have already destroyed the institution of slavery, because it was an institution that could not possibly practice the Golden Rule. There may be other institutions whose resignations we shall have to insist upon accepting, because they, too, are incapable of practicing the Golden Rule. And there are many of our institutions that we should readjust and modify so that they, as institutions, may practice, like good

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

men, the Golden Rule. This will never be a Christian world till the institutions as well as individuals practice justice and Christianity. To convert our institutions may be said, therefore, to be the unique Christian task of the age.

The task, moreover, appeals to the imagination of our generation. Thousands of young Christians, though unmotivated by fear or hope of a hereafter, are profoundly, even passionately, desirous of investing their lives in behalf of the coming Kingdom which their faith beholds afar.

But right here their difficulty begins; for they do not know what to do in behalf of that Kingdom. They would gladly be missionaries, or slum workers, or start a social settlement. They eagerly sing,

"I 'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain, or plain, or sea;"

but, unfortunately, the way is closed, and they despair of ever being able to serve the Kingdom.

So we must confess the Kingdom-hope is at a disadvantage in being rather remote and abstract for the practical religious purposes of all the people. We may dream and exult ever so much over a world growing better, but unless we can somehow bring social service down into close contact with the de-

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

tails of our lives and actually live by it as a motive, one of two things will happen: we shall either grow discouraged at the futility of our lives, or else we shall abstract our religion from our lives, praying and singing and exulting over a Kingdom-dream that we can only dream about, while meantime our daily lives are prayerless, visionless, and godless.

And this danger seriously menaces the social-salvation propaganda of the present day. We are all in danger of being like the child who, when asked by his father at family worship, "Where is our part of the Kingdom of God?" glibly replied, "Up in the moon." Child-labor legislation, industrial accident insurance, social settlements, and amelioration of the rigors of competition are, to most of us, most of the time, to all intents and purposes, up in the moon. Unless we see some closer-at-home opportunity to serve the Kingdom than is offered by most programs of social reform, the Kingdom-motive will be to us little more than an abstraction. And with many, devotion to that abstraction is about all the religious experience they have.

The father just referred to, a few mornings later, tried again. He had intended to teach his six-year-old son that the Kingdom is among the good folks that we know. But this time the child answered

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

as promptly as before, with sweet accents of childish sureness, "Down in our hearts."

Sure enough! Down in our hearts! The father was nonplused for a moment; but he presently discerned that the child's innocence was wiser than his wisdom, and he let the answer stand. Down in our hearts!

The most important religious insight, the insight requisite to the vitality of social religion and the success of our civilization, is the insight to discern that if the Kingdom of God is to come in the earth, it must first come in our hearts. Social salvation can only be realized through individual salvation. The social awakening must be realized by a revival of personal religion.

The truth still remains that our institutions need to be readjusted and reorganized, but it will do little good for our institutions to be converted unless the persons who compose them are converted too. We can not make good institutions out of bad folks, however perfectly the institutions are organized; and if we are to have good folks to build into institutions worthy of the Kingdom of God, they must, above all, have the Kingdom of God down in their hearts. The brotherhood of man is impossible without brotherly men. A good family is impossible

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

without good folks. The principality of the kingdom in which each of us lives is his own home, and there is no service to the kingdom that begins to compare in importance with making that home an ideal principality of the Kingdom. Local units are as vital to the Kingdom as to democracy.

Moreover, just as we can not have a good family-life without the Kingdom of God in our hearts, so we can not have a stable National life without the Kingdom of God in the hearts of the people. Have not we in America had enough of stealing and vulgar, wanton selfishness in politics? Is it not high time that our bland, blind optimism be at an end with respect to this democracy of ours? It has not passed its experimental age. It is not a foregone conclusion that democracy is a success in America; and American democracy certainly will not succeed unless we can get honest men to run it.

No doubt the logic of Jesus' teachings calls for the Christianization of our social institutions. No doubt we must reduce the Master's message to fundamental principles, such as human brotherhood, and then apply those principles not only to persons and intimate personal relations, but to institutions as well. Thus slavery as a system was incompatible with Jesus' principles. So was the divine

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

right of kings. So are, no doubt, many of the institutions of to-day. Let each institution be subjected to the test—that is the use to which Christianity must be put—and the world will never be Christian otherwise.

Nevertheless it is an interesting and, in the light of the present social movement, a curious fact that the great Teacher Himself never carried His own message that far. He devoted His attention not to institutions, but to individuals. His immediate interest was in personal salvation; the social salvation He foresaw as an ultimate result. For example, an industrial system closely akin to slavery existed in Palestine in Jesus' day, and the Roman Empire was full of it; but there is not one word against the system in the Gospels. A tyrannous foreign power unjustly taxed and oppressed the people—but not one word do we read of political revolution. An almost hopelessly effete ecclesiastical system prevailed; but it was the Pharisees He condemned, not their institution. The nearest He came to prescribing for any social organ was when He declared so unequivocally for the inviolability of marriage. He did not so much as make the slightest provision for institutionalizing the movement to which His very life was given.

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

Instead, He loved men and women, served the people, and called individuals to repentance, declaring that the leaven would ultimately leaven the whole lump. Love one another, return good for evil, visit the sick, feed the hungry, forgive your enemies, trust in God, turn from sin; thus the Kingdom is to come.

Let us not, therefore, forget the Master. In our entirely commendable enthusiasm to reform, as the logic of His teaching demands, the un-Christian institutions of society, let us not neglect that which He so explicitly directed, to seek the salvation of our own souls and the souls of our contemporaries, the regeneration of our lives and theirs. For nothing is more certain than that "social organization can never be of a higher type than the individual character and intelligence of the members of the group warrant; and only by raising the intelligence and character of the individual members of society can a higher type of social life permanently result."*

Moreover, let us remind ourselves that our Lord's appeal was essentially and superlatively a religious appeal. His means of regenerating character was through personal religion. And the religion of Jesus Christ that came streaming into the effete civilization of the first century, a civilization

* Ellwood's "Sociology and Modern Social Problems," page 311.

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

sick to nausea with philosophical speculation, and world-weary with the burden of vice and pessimism, was a personal religion, with a personal God, a personal Savior, personal repentance, love, faith, and salvation. And just because it was a personal religion it created a new force in society, and generated a new tendency in civilization.

So must it ever be. The most effective means of bringing the Kingdom of God into men's hearts, and so bringing the world to the Kingdom of God, is personal religion.

Personal religion, because we are individual persons, and after all love does not thrive on abstractions. It must tie us to our housemates and our near neighbors as well as to society. Religion, because we are religious persons, and faith, too, is not satisfied with abstractions; it must show us the way to God and save our souls as well as the social order. Religious faith and love are the sources from which that goodness springs which alone can save the world. Psychology recognizes that fact. Both educational and social theory build upon the principle that religion motivates morality as nothing else can. And we all do know that those praying fathers and mothers of ours, whose faith was vital, had a stability of moral character that we shall fail to develop

The Social Ideals of the Christian Faith

in our children unless we transmit alive to them our fathers' faith. And upon the character of individuals depends not only the coming of the Kingdom for which we dream, but the very security of the social capital we now possess.

The enthusiasms of the social awakening are spreading rapidly and widely in America to-day. And it is well. Young men and women are consecrating themselves to the service of the Kingdom. Men are selecting their life-work or devoting their means and leisure to these great ideals. But if they are to serve effectively the Kingdom of the Christ, that Christ Himself must abide in their hearts. His forgiveness, His peace, His love must fill them, bless them, inspire them, and send them forth to do His will. For by an irreverent, sordid, or immoral life they can tear down more, much more, than their work or their philanthropy can possibly build up. And withal they will fail to really find themselves. But with Christ the Savior in the house of their souls they may become indeed servants in the house of the world.

II

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

THE western religious world has during the last few years been roused to a pitch of exultant enthusiasm over the Christian ideal of the coming Kingdom of God upon the earth. This social version of the Christian faith dreams of an ideal world that is to be gradually realized. Justice is to grow; the social evils that discount the value of life are to be gradually eliminated; peace, prosperity, happiness, and good will are ultimately to dominate human life. The social order, gradually Christianized, is, little by little, to approximate perfection.

This dream has aptly been called the Kingdom-hope. The means by which it is to be realized are changes in laws and institutions whereby such concrete evils as child-labor, the toil of women in factories, the social evil, industrial accidents, and other like monstrosities are to be done away. In short, social reorganization. The Christian who entertains this hope and aspires to help in its realization thinks of some form of social service, such as slum-work, prison-reform, or philanthropy, as the imme-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

diate program in which he himself, if he could but participate, might help in the realization of the coming Kingdom. The Church, under the inspiration of this ideal, is itself agitating and undertaking various forms of social service. All sorts of social reforms are being suggested, and agitators abound. At the heart of the modern social aspiration is the demand for a more equitable distribution of wealth. It is everywhere felt and frankly avowed that this is prerequisite to all of the other parts of the social program, and many believe that all the other ideal conditions will follow as an inevitable consequence if only an equitable distribution of wealth can be secured.

But it may be well to raise the question whether a materialistic and external program of this character can reach the heart of the matter. For man is not merely external; there is also the internal aspect of his nature. His environment is not merely a material world, it is also a social world and a world of ideals. It has been aptly said: "Our material progress can never add anything to the real happiness and social betterment of the race. On the contrary, it is possible to conceive of a society in which every one has an economic surplus—a society rolling in wealth, approximately equally divided, and

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

yet one in which human misery in its worst forms of vice, crime, self-destruction, and pessimism prevail." Something else is necessary besides social reorganization, however important this may be in itself.

To imagine that these external changes alone can give us a perfect world constitutes us dreamers like those of the Renaissance period, who vainly imagined that familiarity with the ancient classics and insight into ultimate metaphysical mysteries could actualize a Utopian world. But the dreams of the Renaissance failed tragically of realization, and from these dreamers of an earlier day we may well learn a lesson. An ideal world can only be realized in proportion to the morality and intelligence of the masses of the common people. What we need to-day is not only to reorganize our institutions on more moral lines, but also a deepening of the moral life of individuals. The greatest need of the age, and the most important requisite to the realization of the Kingdom of God upon earth, is the moral insight to discern the social consequence of individual morals and a corresponding revival of personal moral earnestness. He who aspires to devote his life to the service of the Kingdom should, above all things, perceive clearly that nothing he

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

can say or do can possibly contribute more than the integrity and uprightness of his own life.

In order to a clearer insight into the social consequences of personal morality, consider the three vices: licentiousness, gambling, and drunkenness. The immediate effects of the first are diseased bodies, broken homes, disgraced parents, outraged offspring, ruined lives, and the mental anguish of shame and despair. As for the second, think of the worthless, wasted lives of young men, and of the fathers whose gray hairs have been brought down in sorrow to the grave. Intemperance has made us so familiar with its harvest of horrors that we are calloused to them and contemplate them with an almost fatalistic hopelessness and indifference. The trail of poverty, suffering, heartbreak, and death which this vice has left in its train is almost equivalent to perpetual war.

But these vices have not only their direct and immediate social consequences, they have their indirect effects as well. For in a complex society like ours they have assumed commercialized forms. Everywhere they have organized to corrupt the officers of the law in order to secure their own protection. One of the most shameful chapters in the story of our cities' shame is the complicity of law

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

officers with the organized interests of vice. Officers whose sworn duty it is to protect the people from the underworld have often protected the underworld from the people. Not only so, but by an alliance with public-service corporations they and the vice interests together have been able absolutely to control the governments of many of our American cities. Thus vice has often rendered municipal democracy a failure, temporarily, at least, has prostituted popular government to its own uses, and raised the question whether or not democracy can succeed in America. Delos F. Wilcox asserts that vice is the chief enemy of democracy.

Imagine, now, a society in which these vices and their consequences have been pushed to their logical conclusion; a society, in other words, in which they are universal. A more veritable hell upon earth can not be imagined. On the other hand, conceive a society from which these vices have been entirely eliminated (and this, by the way, is as conceivable as a society in which an equitable distribution of wealth has been attained), and you have conceived a society that has made tremendous strides toward the realization of the Kingdom of God.

How evident it is, therefore, that the individual who contributes to the prevalence of these vices in

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

society is a tearer-down, a destroyer, a veritable traitor to the common good! How evident, too, that he whose life is immune from these moral diseases is making a large contribution to the welfare of society! How much social service, how much of the work of the reformer or philanthropist would it require, forsooth, to cancel the damage that naturally and inevitably accrues from a vicious life?

Again, in order that the social consequence of personal morality may be more clearly discerned, let us consider what morality is in itself.

It is fundamentally a social device. It is the indispensable basis of the social order. It is by society that moral standards have been set up as the result of the race's experience. The things that we call right are the things that the race has demonstrated to be conservative of the general welfare. The essential reason for the moral life of the individual is not primarily to secure his own happiness, but to make possible successful social relations. Courage, for instance, the virtue of war, has as its function the security of the group and the triumph of the national cause. The object of business integrity is to make business organization and activity possible. In countries where business integrity is

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

at a low ebb, credit and the complexer forms of commercial organization are an impossibility. Truthfulness, likewise, is a device by means of which we are able to live together. So are all the virtues. It is true that society usually rewards the virtuous man. But, moreover, because of the social law of survival and the spiritual nature of man, the virtuous man is, in the long run, the happiest man. Nevertheless, if the welfare of society requires it, the ultimate sacrifice may be required from the individual.

Only a socio-central ethical theory, therefore, can stand the test of logic and human history.

The same truth may be stated conversely and concretely by pointing out the fact that one immoral person can ruin a family, one rascal can bankrupt a firm, a single traitor can lose a battle, a few rogues can spoil a community. Likewise a sufficient proportion of immoral people can debauch a nation and undermine a civilization.

In society the paths of individual interests cross and recross, but the individuals must not clash. Friction and collisions must be prevented, and slight irritations must be soothed. Ambitious, grasping, passionate, conniving human nature, bent on getting

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

what it wants without regard to the rights of others, must be directed, restrained, or suppressed in the interests of the greater number. Those animal instincts which the struggle for existence among the lower orders necessarily augmented are, many of them, still necessary to the survival of the human species. However, they must be guided, curbed, restrained, controlled. Otherwise human life could never rise above brute level. To this end the thou-shalts and the thou-shalt-nots of the moral law are absolutely requisite. And this is almost their total function.

Individual morality is, therefore, the most fundamental thing in society. It is the mechanical design by means of which part fits part and wheel mashes into wheel in this great social machine. It is the plan that transforms the mob into the Macedonian phalanx, and brings social order out of individual chaos. The ancient virtues are, therefore, more valuable to us than modern inventions. We might better fail to secure our share of the world's trade than fail in the application of the moral law. It were better to let our children grow up in ignorance than to bring them up in schools where their moral fiber is disintegrated. We might better dispense with the telephone and the telegraph, be de-

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

prived of our modern transportation systems, and go back to the wheelbarrow and the ox-cart than to be deprived of the moral law which has stood the test of centuries, for without it society could not exist at all.

Such considerations as these should make it clear how much damage can be done by a single cog-wheel in the social machine which does not fit its place, by a single individual whose life is immoral. He is a destroyer and an iconoclast. He disintegrates and tears to pieces the social fabric. He is an undesirable citizen. If there were none but such as he, civilization would be impossible, and the Kingdom-hope could never even have been conceived. But the person whose life is straight, whose deeds are good, whose morality conserves the social fabric and contributes to the moral progress of the world, should understand that his service to the coming Kingdom, for which he prays, is no mean service. Let him in this find inspiration.

But there is a higher level than the mere abstinence from positive vice. There are higher virtues. From the consideration of the infringement of positive laws let us proceed, therefore, to those sentiments and feelings upon which the gospel places its emphasis as the great moral desiderata of life—

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

sentiments of sympathy, love, and good will. By so doing we shall be able to see that the person who lives on this high Christian plane makes a positive contribution as great as is the negative damage wrought by the vicious individual.

For these sentiments are not merely sentiments, they are instincts. They are instincts, moreover, which lie at the very basis of society. Professor Ross points out that the contribution of human nature itself to the social order consists principally in the instincts of sympathy and the sense of justice. Without these constituent elements of the psychic endowment of man, society could never have begun at all; and the moral progress of society is to be precisely in proportion as these instincts triumph over the anti-social instincts of human nature. The more there are of these sentiments the nearer will the Kingdom of God be at hand. And precisely this is the core of Jesus' social message. He seized upon the socializing instincts of man and sought to augment them. The real Christian is the person whose habituated interests cluster around these instincts. He gets his joy of life from them rather than from the anti-social and animal interests of life. In a world full of real Christians who have developed

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

these higher and more social interests, justice will thrive, mutual help and kindness will abound, and loyalty to the causes of humanity and the cry of human need will never go unheard.

Imagine a world in which there are no hearts imbued with the Christian—or shall we say natural?—sentiments of sympathy, good will, and love. How dark and cold and unlivable, indeed, such a world would be! Byron's picture of darkness might well be applicable to such a world. And he who permits those sentiments to die out of his soul is helping to make the world such a world as that. In such a world social justice would never be dreamed of, and the reorganization and Christianization of the social order would be an unheard-of formula, and there could be no Kingdom-hope.

Fancy, on the other hand, a world in which every individual soul is filled with love of man, sympathy, kindness, and good will abounding in every heart. That would be a world in which the Kingdom of God had been attained. The brotherhood of man would no longer be a hope, but an actualized reality, for it would be a world full of brotherly men. In a world like that social institutions could not long remain unjust.

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

It is not intended by these remarks to cast one iota of disparagement upon the social application of Christianity. The social temper is a grand new passion. It is only intended to domesticate it and utilize it. For most of us must live at home; our world is a little world; our contacts, for the most part, are with individuals and are personal contacts. We have no opportunity, most of us, to make appreciable contributions to public reforms. Nevertheless we all ought to realize that we can help. And the help that we can render is a most valuable kind, for the moral fiber of the mass of common people is absolutely prerequisite to the realization of the reforms that are on the contemporaneous docket. The sculptor can not mold or polish slacked lime. It is only the hardest marble that will take and hold the forms of beauty that his artist soul conceives, and receive the polish that will reflect the glorious light of the sun.

Let us, therefore, reconsecrate our lives to God and the service of the Kingdom. Let us begin every new day with the devout prayer that that day may be a day of upright devotion to the duties and responsibilities of our task and station. And let us pray, moreover, that the God who was the God of

The Social Effects of Individual Morals

social evolution through the centuries of the past, and who from time to time has sent an Amos or an Isaiah, a Savonarola or an Erasmus, a Wesley or a Booth, may send to America, during this generation, a prophet whose message shall reach the ears of all our people and inspire them to lives of firm and stable morality.

III

Social Christianity Begins at Home

Social Christianity Begins at Home

THE Kingdom of God begins at home. The most important service that any Christian can render to the Kingdom of God upon earth is to make his own home an ideal principality of that Kingdom. For here is a social institution, the family, which needs no reconstruction. Its organization is already on perfect lines. The monogamous family is the perfect family type. What it needs to make it a social success is the right kind of folks to constitute it. So far as the family is concerned, therefore, the social application of the gospel depends upon the moral regeneration of individuals; and there is no social aspect of Christianity that begins to compare in importance with this. Moreover, here is an immediate, right-at-hand opportunity for each of us to make a social contribution.

In order to make clear the Christian's social duty with respect to this institution, it may be well to consider how basic a social institution it is.

The Bible records in its earliest chapters the

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

Hebrew conception of the origin of the family, and St. Paul emphasizes the fundamental character of the institution. As for Jesus, there is no specific subject on which he speaks more explicitly than on the inviolability of the monogamous family relation. Professor Peabody has pointed out that his insistence was even more stringent than we are wont to interpret it. His presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee is an incidental testimony as to his conception of marriage which we all refer to with pleasure, even though its significance may not be great. As has been pointed out in another place, this institution is the only one for whose plan of organization the Great Teacher took pains to prescribe.

History also gives abundant testimony to the sacredness of this institution, for it shows us that, although other forms of the family have existed at various times and places, no other form has been able to conserve as high a type of civilization as the monogamous form, and in fact the struggle for existence has all but eliminated these other forms. Moreover, history has furnished repeated instances of the fact that when the pure family-life has been seriously broken down, civilization has broken down with it. The case of Rome is a no less serious warn-

Social Christianity Begins at Home

ing in this respect because reference to it has become so trite.

Turning from history, we find science furnished with abundant evidence that promiscuity causes sterility, not only by reason of the diseases that it gives rise to, but for other reasons perhaps not fully understood. This fact makes it evident to those who have looked closely into the matter that promiscuity must lead ultimately to the elimination of the race that practices it. As to the diseases just referred to, it is doubtful whether there is any force at work among the American people that menaces more seriously their perpetuity. The very antiquity of the monogamous family, moreover, is one of the strongest evidences of its validity. Westermarck and others, who have made extensive investigations among primitive peoples, assert that the permanent union of one man with one woman is an almost universal rule except where the morals of the native peoples have been corrupted by foreigners. Some have even gone so far as to assert with considerable show of data that a stable monogamous family very frequently obtains among anthropoid apes. If this be true it would go to show that this type of union is older than the human race itself, bred in our very bone, as it were, so that nature may not

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

tolerate its violation without serious biological retaliation.

These facts give us a point of view for a clear appreciation of the far-reaching social destructiveness of sexual vices and divorce. Together they mean the perpetuation of the diseases they engender, with their consequent poverty and crime. Their prevalence among us would be an incontrovertible sign of decay if permitted to continue and thrive. They would mean the inevitable collapse of our civilization and the extinction of our race. The seriousness of this menace as it exists in America today has frequently been pointed out, and it can not be overestimated.

The causes are doubtless many and varied. No doubt it is true that economic pressure, and the social maladjustments resulting, often do give rise both to vice and to divorce. But the frequent protest that we have recently heard from the pens of young women of the class from which the victims of commercialized vice are said to be most frequently recruited indicate very clearly that these causes do not undermine the virtue of those who are possessed of a staunch philosophy of life. Professor Peabody remarks very succinctly that not a hard life but a soft creed is the cause of divorce,

Social Christianity Begins at Home

and no doubt there is a large measure of truth in his remark. Human nature being as it is, we may never, of course, ignore the economic and social forces as causes of vice and divorce. Still it may always be validly contended that low ideals and flabby moral fiber must always be reckoned with.

As a matter of fact, the dry rot that is eating at the very vitals of our family-life in America is exaggerated individualism. This is a philosophy of life consciously or subconsciously held which believes that the vital end and highest good of life is pleasure. All laws are appraised with respect to their capacity of contributing thereto. The responsibilities which the individual owes to society and its members are largely ignored, and duty is a small word in the vocabulary of such persons. This philosophy inevitably undermines all social institutions which depend upon the sense of duty and responsibility. This spirit seems to have been growing, especially among our middle and wealthier classes, since the days of our grandfathers. And the materialism of the ages has by no means diminished it. And it is this spirit which, more than any other assignable cause, has made such inroads upon the stability of the American family.

No further comment is necessary, therefore, to

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

make clear the destructive social effects of the lives of these men and women whose conduct tends to the spread of vice and the increase of divorce. Whoever entertains toward his own housemate and family responsibilities those hedonistic thoughts and feelings which, if carried to their logical outcome, would lead him to repudiate the most intimate social obligations any human being can possibly assume, may well tremble, for he is on the verge of a precipice. Let him beware lest he be numbered among the destroyers of the social fabric. Such as he postpone indefinitely the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Not only these considerations, however, but the positive contributions that can be made to the social welfare by the maintenance of ideal family relations may well be considered. For they also make it clear that the Kingdom of God begins at home.

The best things in life have arisen out of family ties, and can only be conserved by perpetuation of those ties. All are now familiar with what John Fiske discovered in the lengthened period of human infancy. It was he who made clear to us for the first time how all the higher values of life have arisen out of the relations made necessary by the helplessness of infants and children. Love, altruism, self-sacrifice, and perhaps even religious faith,

Social Christianity Begins at Home

could never have arisen except out of the relations of parent to child and of brother to brother. The dearest words in all languages are the words of the hearthstone. Consider the incomparable values and joys of life connoted by such words as mother, father, sweetheart, babe, sister, brother, son, and daughter. We may legitimately state as one of the normal ends of a family, its function as a producer of the highest good of human life.

Another and, for our present purpose, a more important social function of the family is its function as a training school of the social virtues. It was the original social unit where such training was first given, and no other institution can entirely supersede it. Here children are habituated in obedience and respect for authority, habits absolutely essential to the success of government and the stability of society. Here brothers and sisters learn self-restraint, sympathy, mutual help, and the respect for the rights of others, traits of character absolutely fundamental to society. Here adults learn the full meaning of love and the self-abnegation it motivates. Here they realize, too, the joys and satisfactions of the most exacting responsibilities. The terms brotherhood and fatherhood have been seized upon to symbolize the highest religious ideals that the world has

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

ever conceived, and these symbols would be utterly empty of meaning were it not for the meaning contributed by the family relation. Thus the individual is socialized in the home as he can be socialized nowhere else, and that socialization is drilled so early and so deeply into the habits of the individual and woven so intricately into the highest ideals of his life that he can never escape them. Thus the family transmits from age to age the moral heritage, and moral progress is possible only as the family furnishes us with the higher types of altruism and nobler specimens of social devotion.

It is only as society is liberally furnished with individuals who have acquired these higher virtues that the better phases of our civilization are made possible. Moreover, as has been said, the stability of democratic government is absolutely dependent upon the habit of obedience and respect for authority. It is clear, therefore, that to spare the rod is not only to spoil the child, but also to spoil the republic, for it furnishes us with a generation of men and women who have never learned respect and obedience for law. It might not be amiss to apply Professor Hall's term "degenerate pedagogy" to the modern home as well as to the modern school. For we seem to be obsessed with the idea in these days

Social Christianity Begins at Home

that the individuality and freedom of young America must above all things be conserved. As a matter of fact, rigorous drill in habits of obedience, which is necessary to the proper moral regimen of childhood, can seldom be enforced without sterner persuasives than are sanctioned by the domestic pedagogy now in vogue. The national custom of indulging the willfulness of children and cultivating in them an exaggerated notion of personal liberty has far-reaching social and political consequences of which the average parent is by no means aware.

Similar remarks might cogently be made about the habits of mutual help. We are suffering in America from a lack of public spirit. Democracy is like life-insurance: no more can be gotten out of it in the long run than is put into it. And if we are to have public-spirited citizens, the basis of that trait of character must be developed by the relations children are taught to maintain toward one another and toward their neighbors and local institutions.

Since these things are so, consider the social influence of an ideal home. In such a home are in vogue the Pauline ideal relations of husband to wife and wife to husband, of parents to children and children to parents, of masters to servants and servants to masters. Love reigns in such a home, and it is

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

a veritable heaven upon earth. In a home presided over by the right kind of a husband and father, kindness banishes most of the causes of friction that furnish the grist for the divorce-mill. We are told that the increase of divorce is partly due to the commendable demand on the part of womankind for the enjoyment of her just rights. She is rightly protesting against oppression that so often prevailed under the old régime, where the lord and master of the house was tyrant as well. This, no doubt, is in large measure true, and perhaps there is a sense in which the increased divorce is a necessary evil attendant upon the social advance of abolishing this ancient tyranny; but kindness on the part of the husband and father vacates this entire contention. Kindness, therefore, is a most efficient antiseptic of social disease.

Again, how far-reaching and beneficent is the social influence of the good housewife and mother. Many a saintly matron is prone to lament that she has never had the opportunity to do much good in the world. She should be led to understand the social significance of her life-work. She has contributed more than a host of social workers. And, moreover, the foolish, undomestic woman who sees only the limitations, handicaps, and restraints of her

Social Christianity Begins at Home

home, should also be led to see the opportunity for social service that she is missing. How empty is the shallow round of social functions, how fruitless the energy devoted to the current fashions, how transient the joys of freedom from responsibility, as compared with the usefulness, the benefit, and the satisfaction of training boys and girls into physical, moral, and spiritual fitness for their places in the social order. Occasionally some woman who is endowed with unusual genius may make a larger contribution to the world's welfare as a reformer and philanthropist than she could do in any other way; but to the normal woman no other task offers a sphere of activity or opportunity which begins to compare in social usefulness with the domestic sphere. If God has in store a brighter crown for one than for another of His children, it certainly is reserved for her who has performed efficiently and well the duties of that sphere. And certainly, if love returning in old age to the giver of love is the best of earth's rewards, she will find herself rich in reward for the service she has rendered to humanity.

The social application of Christianity indeed begins at home. For the high purpose in hand it is far more requisite that America should be full of

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

ideal homes than that we should secure an equitable distribution of wealth. To be sure, many families are depressed by poverty and hard life below the economic level where an ideal home is possible, and the necessity of securing for such families a sufficient economic basis can by no means be gainsaid or discounted. Nevertheless there are all too many homes where the economic causes are by no means the real causes that interfere with their fulfillment of proper moral and spiritual functions. Let us, therefore, place alongside of our desire for larger social justice an equal desire for a higher domestic life; for upon this, as perhaps upon no other one thing, depends our future as a nation. And imagine, moreover, what kind of a world this would be if all the homes that might be ideal were really so.

Such a hope as this is, however, somewhat inconsistent on the part of a man or a woman who has not made his own home, so far as in him lies, ideal. The political unit, so to speak, of the Kingdom of God in which each of us registers his vote is his own home. The most consistent and the most effective social service, therefore, that any of us can perform is to render his own home a little model of heaven upon earth.

But this can not be done unless the Kingdom is,

Social Christianity Begins at Home

in the words of the child referred to elsewhere, down in our own hearts. This is the essential principle. Ideal institutions, ideal society, depend upon the ideal family, and the ideal family depends upon ideal persons. If we feel, therefore, as doubtless most of us do, that we can not remake ourselves, we shall do well to pray that some transfiguring power higher than ourselves shall give us a new heart. Such personal salvation will prove to be social salvation as well.

Let us here register two pleas in behalf of the home as a social institution. The first of these pleas is for the restoration to the American home of the old-fashioned family altar of our fathers and grandfathers. What an influence it exerted upon the lives of those of us who can remember it as a part of our childhood! Its value is greater than either our own generation or our fathers' was aware. Read again the "Cotter's Saturday Night." Listen reverently while Robert Burns portrays the scenes of worship in the humble Scottish home, and ponder well what he says:

"From scenes like these old Scotia's glories rise."

The second plea is for homeless children, especially those of our great cities. From them, if they

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

are neglected, must inevitably be recruited our worst class of criminals. Nor will institutional life adequately solve the problem in their behalf. Nature has decreed that they shall be reared in homes. Science declares that even red-headed, unprepossessing boys, and homely, unkempt little girls, granted they are not positively neurotic with respect to birth, will turn out as well on the average as the offspring of our own homes, if only they are given the advantage of a favorable environment. There are hundreds of childless wives who might rear one or more such children. To be sure, it would cost them the disturbance of an occasional night's rest, the occasional forfeiture of the annual trip to the seaside or the mountains, and the cancellation of some attractive social engagements; but it would also have its rewards. It would mean the encircling arms and clinging fingers of a little child uttering precious words those wives otherwise may never hear. It would mean a purpose in life that would lift the life to a level of incomparably greater worth. It would mean the solace and comfort in later years of manly sons and affectionate daughters. It would mean, moreover, a service to the Kingdom of God with which scarcely anything else which they will have the opportunity to do can compare.

IV

The Social Harvest of Materialism

The Social Harvest of Materialism

IT is proverbially remarked that philosophy bakes no bread. But Professor James, in the first chapters of his "Pragmatism," insists that it is the most important characteristic of an individual or a nation. This is because philosophy is something more than mere intellectual speculation. It is, as Rudolph Eucken urges, a serious and often passionate attempt to solve the problem of human life. A man's philosophy is his answer to the question of what constitutes for him the ideal meaning of life. What are the ends really worth pursuing, the interests that constitute his life really worth the living.

Because philosophy in this sense is so serious a concern, some of the great historic systems of philosophical thought have exerted incalculable influence upon the course of human events. Plato's system is an illustration, especially in its bearing upon the monastic conception of life prevalent during the Middle Ages. As a matter of fact the distinction with which we are all familiar between the sacred and secular is a far-off echo of this ancient philo-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

sophical system. In the sense in which the term is here used, the teaching of Jesus may be considered a philosophy, for they prescribe a way of life, and it is superfluous to comment here upon their influence.

Each individual human being has his philosophy of life. Perhaps he holds it consciously, perhaps only subconsciously. But in either case it determines the ends for which he strives, and motivates in the last analysis his entire activity.

Modern nations all differ from one another with respect to the philosophy of life that prevails among them, and each age in the world's history is characterized by a dominating philosophy peculiar to itself. This fact we often overlook in our study of history, and by interpreting some epoch of the past in terms of the philosophy of human life that now prevails among us we utterly misconstrue the historic epoch to which our attention is directed. It is only by putting ourselves into sympathetic appreciation of the prevailing philosophy of any age that we can adequately understand it. Thus the ancient Assyrian Empire and civilization must be interpreted in terms of the militarism that seems to have dominated its activities. The Greek peoples during the centuries immediately following the Periclean

The Social Harvest of Materialism

age were actuated by an excessively individualistic conception of life, and this dominated the very course of their history. Monastic asceticism and chivalric militarism contended for supremacy during the mediæval epoch. The spirit of the Enlightenment and of the century that saw the rise of democracy was again individualistic. Thus the pendulum swings from one extreme to another.

The philosophy of human life that dominates our own age, permeates its atmosphere, and possesses the thought of nearly all of our people, is materialistic. We are convinced that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. We worship success, and spell the name of our god with dollar signs instead of s's. In terms of success we realize that we ourselves are appraised by our boyhood friends and the members of our own family, and in the same terms we are preparing ourselves to appraise our own children. Hence the evidences of material success and power are sought after with an energy sometimes almost terrific. We desire these possessions not merely as means of personal gratification, but because they are the current standards by which the worth and achievement of personalities are measured and compared.

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

By this standard do we not only estimate ourselves and one another, but also the achievements of the age itself. It is to our material progress and development that we point with pride—our transportation system, our splendid commercial and industrial cities, our multiplied agencies of production, our new and incomparably efficient forms of business organization. These are characteristic of the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution, we believe, divides the world's history into two great epochs, and we are quite confident that more has been achieved since than before. Thus do we appraise the age in terms of mammon. The manifestations of this philosophy are everywhere in evidence. The excessive business activity of the age and the luxuries that are displayed everywhere are perhaps its most concrete examples. But deeper than this are certain habits of thought and action common among us. Thus, not generals and poets and statesmen and philosophers and prophets catch most effectively the imagination of the American people and become the heroes of youthful ambition, but captains of industry. Our rivalries and emulation further betray our materialistic view of life. A large proportion of our people are living habitually beyond their means in the frantic endeavor to

The Social Harvest of Materialism

keep up appearances so as to maintain a social standing equivalent to that of their associates, or so as to secure admittance to the social circle of their superiors. Our very reforms are materialistic at the basis. Perhaps this is rightly so, for an epoch of industrial democracy must not too tardily follow upon the heels of political democracy. Nevertheless the labor problem, socialism, and other kindred movements clearly reveal the fact that even our reforms are materialistic. Sometimes this materialism is definitely and explicitly set forth, as in the Marxian theory of history. More often it is implicitly held, as by the millions of our common people, who entertain an almost childlike faith that a more equitable distribution of wealth will prove a panacea for all the ills of life.

Nor is this conception of life confined to the rich. It is even more influential among our middle classes, for there the struggle to secure the material goods of life is more strenuous and the tragedies of failure more numerous and distressing. Not he alone who has, and whose only joy of life consists in enjoying what he has, is a materialist; but equally he who has not, but struggles to have, and who believes that he has missed the joy of life because he does not secure. This spirit permeates also the laboring

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

classes, for they also estimate their lives bitterly in terms merely of the things which they do not possess.

Since epochs differ with respect to their dominating philosophy, we must conclude that in each case peculiar causes must have been at work. The reasons for the current vogue of the materialistic philosophy of life are not difficult to discover. They are to be sought in the industrial history of the century and a half just past. The accumulation of capital in England during the eighteenth century, and the excessive demand for the products of English industries over the supply, gave rise to a deeply-felt want for more rapid means of production. The inventions which followed as a result of this necessity are too well known to need enumerating here. Chief among them was the steam engine. These inventions revolutionized industry, and by the middle of the nineteenth century the factory system had displaced former methods of production almost everywhere in western Europe and America. Steam transportation and electric communication followed almost immediately. These industrial changes created the necessity for larger aggregations of capital, and the corporate organization of industry was the inevitable result. At the same time these changes were occurring the vast resources of North America,

The Social Harvest of Materialism

not to mention those of other continents, invited exploitation. These modern industrial changes and these vast new resources opened up unprecedented opportunities for wealth-getting. This being the case, men naturally devoted their attention to building factories and railroads, promoting corporations, opening up new areas, and exploiting new resources. Occupied thus with these activities, it could hardly be otherwise than that man should become preoccupied with them, and the inevitable commercial estimate of life took possession of a commercial age.

The consequences, particularly the social consequences—for these are our special concern here—have been far-reaching, and often far, indeed, from beneficial. This spirit of the age has made inroads upon our family-life. Fathers have become too busy to properly companion and train their boys. Mothers have been drawn into the social whirl with moral consequences to their children too prevalent and plainly seen to need mention. The strain to maintain the standard of living demanded by materialistic ideals has not infrequently been too great for the family ties to endure. Many a divorce has resulted.

The Church, also, has everywhere felt the influence of this tendency. Men have grown too busy

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

to attend its services. More than that, they have grown so practical (the word has come to connote the spirit of the age) that they have no use for the spiritual good of the religious life, and therefore nothing to go to church for. Classes of our population have been alienated from the Church because the Church has refused or neglected (perhaps unjustifiably) to espouse their cause of industrial reform. Consequently the problem of the alienation of the masses of the Church has become more or less acute. But perhaps the most ominous influence of materialism upon the religious life of our people is in its influence upon the clergy. Even they have come to estimate themselves and one another in terms of the salaries they receive. As a result their struggle for place and preferment is worldly enough, and often unscrupulous. How can the world be expected to hear and heed the gospel message from the lips of priests who are themselves offering sacrifice upon the altars of Mammon?

Our political life has also felt the pressure of materialistic ideals. If life's highest values are estimated in terms of salaries and other emoluments only, how can we expect that the emoluments will always be questioned rigorously as to their sources? If men enter public life for the money there is in it,

The Social Harvest of Materialism

and scarcely ever for other reasons, naturally they will seek to get all the money out of it they can. And the temptation to accept dishonest money will not be so vigorously scorned as in an age and among a people where honor and fidelity to public trust are placed among the highest values of life. Further, as long as business offers so many opportunities to secure what is considered the highest good, men who are successful in business will be loath to turn to the field of politics. Not only that, but they will be able to spare but little time from their pursuit of private wealth to devote to the interests of the general welfare. Inattention to public interests will naturally become quite general. From among a people who are almost universally too busy making money to give attention to political interests, and who, moreover, conceive a government's chief function to be the maintenance of business prosperity, how is it to be expected that there will arise in sufficient numbers high-minded, public-spirited men as candidates for political service? Moreover, since business conceives it to be the function of government to conserve the interests of business, how is it to be expected that money motives will not be brought to bear upon the public servants who are in the public service for money ends? A materialistic nation must

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

inevitably expect its government to be honeycombed with graft. And if that government is a young democracy, its success and ultimate survival will inevitably be jeopardized. Truly has it been said by one of the closest students of popular government in America, that we are sick unto death with the money-mania.

Perhaps it may be proper to hint at still other consequences of the materialistic spirit of our age, which, though less evident and immediate, may possibly be of even greater significance. It is a question how long a people can endure the stress of such a strenuous life as our American life has been for the past generation or two, especially when that strain is not merely physical, but nervous. Nor is the nervous strain the strain of mental work alone, but the strain and worry of the rivalries, ambitions, and emulations previously referred to. The fret, anxiety, and disappointment draw heavily on our vitality. The wear and tear, moreover, is not any the less when the struggle is, as many of us have realized, for ends that are not worth the struggle. Who can be sure that this is not among the causes of the restless nervousness which foreigners observe among our people, and which we ourselves may discern evidences of in the immense demand for popular amuse-

The Social Harvest of Materialism

ments? Who can be certain that there is no causal connection between these things and the alarming prevalence of crime, insanity, and neurosis? Is it not conceivable that the race which has brought about the marvelous industrial development of modern times shall fail to survive to enjoy its benefits simply because the strain has incapacitated it for reproducing its native population with sufficient rapidity to hold its own against the superior fecundity of alien peoples who have been attracted to our shores by that very industrial progress which we have produced? And it is impossible but that our protracted service of a god who can not satisfy the depths of the human soul shall leave us in the end oppressed by the devitalizing world-weariness and pessimism always characteristic of a decadent epoch.

To the Christian inspired with the Kingdom-hope all this is discouraging indeed, for he knows that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. He knows, moreover, that an age can not serve both God and Mammon, and that the Kingdom of Heaven can never come in an age devoted to the service of self. The social consequences of materialism are to him distressing indeed, and he prays daily that this philosophy of

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

life may rapidly give place to conceptions more Christian. He realizes, moreover, that whatever means contribute to the displacement of this philosophy of life will hasten the coming of the Kingdom. And he feels that if he can contribute anything toward this result, he will be performing a valuable social service.

The social service that can be rendered by a single individual who, without conscious effort, is blissfully indifferent to the material estimate of life may perhaps effectively be illustrated by an incident. There was once a man of this stamp who taught biology in the high school of a small city in the Middle West. He lived a simple life, was maintaining a happy home, and rearing well a family of considerable size on a small income. He was absolutely without restless effort to be contented with small means. Instead he thoroughly enjoyed his life, his home, his profession, and his religion. Years afterwards—a long period of Protestant missionary service in the Orient having intervened—this man met a young Jewish rabbi who had been one of his pupils at the time he was a high-school teacher. He was quite surprised to discover that the young man had become a rabbi, for he had in the former days looked upon him as the heir and

The Social Harvest of Materialism

promising successor of a leading local merchant. When asked by his former teacher as to his reasons for the choice of a life-work, the teacher was completely dumbfounded when the young Jew replied that it was the teacher himself whose influence had, more than anything else, determined his choice. Pressed for an explanation, the young rabbi replied that the teacher's manner of life had set him to thinking that there was something higher and better than merely to make money.

Ideals are contagious. They are not transmitted from soul to soul by argument on the part of those who only half believe them. They are transmitted by suggestion from the example of those who believe them so completely, so habitually, and so subconsciously that they put forth no effort to resist competing ideals held by those about them. All that is necessary to liquidate the excessive materialism of our age is simply for enough of us to believe thus really and genuinely the Christian ideals instead of the materialistic. Whoever serves God instead of Mammon in the depths of his heart contributes his service to that end as surely as did the teacher referred to above; and just as this man's influence must have radiated about him in an ever-widening circle, so must the influence of every other such per-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

son. This ideal once started in vogue, its vogue increases by geometric ratio.

Those Christians, then, who are ambitious to render social service in the interests of the coming Kingdom of God in the world may well look to their own hearts to discover there whether the influence of their ideals is making for or against the materialistic spirit of the age. And if they discover there a restlessness, an effort of resistance to that spirit, they may well seek a change of heart in the ways it has so often been sought. For here again it is true that by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God. And he whose personal salvation makes him a servant from the heart of God instead of Mammon may be sure that he will make his proportionate contribution to the overthrow of the kingdom of Mammon and the establishment of his own Father's Kingdom in the earth.

V

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

THE message of Rauschenbusch and the other prophets of social Christianity have already been referred to. That message has indeed moved profoundly the religious world. But just now we are turning to another religious message that bids fair to move us at least as profoundly. That is the message of Rudolph Eucken, of Jena.

His plea is for the spiritual life. He contends that its demands are irrepressible and perennial. The whole history of philosophy he interprets as the expression of the spiritual nature of man seeking to solve the problem of human life. He insists, moreover, that any age which repudiates the needs of the soul must inevitably be followed by an age which swings back through spiritual unrest to the spiritual life. On the first page of his little booklet entitled "Back to Religion" he declares that it is a superficial observer of the signs of our times who believes that this age is characterized only by blatant denial, for, he continues, however much the denial of religion may yet obtain among the masses, there is

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

evident a demand arising out of the intellect and out of the depths of men's souls for a return to the spiritual life, an undeniable yearning for more depth of life.

What, now, does Eucken mean by this characteristic phrase of his, "The depths of men's souls?"

He means, I think, those parts of our natures which activity, pleasure, power, and learning fail to satisfy; those instinctive needs and desires which have led men in all ages to construct philosophies and theologies, liturgies and creeds, hymns and prayers, and live by them. Those capacities of our minds which are exercised and satisfied by the consciousness of duty well done, sorrows submissively and sweetly borne, the misery of existence reverently contemplated: this is the depths of our souls. In the depths of our souls we feel remorse for sin, the joy of forgiveness, and the enthusiasm of consecration. In the depths of our souls are emotions of repentance, mystical joys of faith, and immortal hopes. In the depths of our souls do we contemplate nature's vastness and power, her beauty and order, and her fierce relentless. The depths of our souls respond to the facts of suffering, sorrow, and death. It is in the depths of our souls that we experience that war in our members of which the

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

apostle writes, the depressing sense of guilt, and the exultation of moral victory. Our imaginations, reacting against the imperfections and incompleteness of our own life and surroundings construct, in the depths of our souls, ideals of a perfect life and a perfect world.

In the depths of our souls, says Professor Eucken, there is unmistakable demand for more depth of life. What does he mean again, by this phrase, "More depth of life?" Not more business activity; not more of the excitements of pleasure, touring, and travel; not more power of material success, nor conquests of the scientific intellect: but something deeper than these. He means more peace of mind and repose of soul; more singleness of worthy purpose, less clash and conflict of inner desires; more mastery of self and loyalty to others; more comfort of faith; more joy of prayer; more delight of loving and being loved; more strength of soul to resist temptations and bear unbearable griefs; more insight into the secrets of union with God; more noble enthusiasm for holy ideals. He means more satisfaction of these passionate longings we so often feel for a holier life; the sparks of that triumphant inner fire that from time to time is kindled in men's souls by renunciation of love, or even

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

life, in behalf of holy causes; more of that insight of soul which gives us visions of the invisible world where broken arcs are completed in the perfect round. This is more depth of life.

It is with such phrases as these that Eucken refers to the spiritual life. And to this he says we must inevitably return if we are to save our lives from emptiness and our age from barrenness. To this, moreover, he sees signs that we are already returning; for the souls of men are never satisfied for long with the mere husks of life.

It must be conceded that the epoch through which we have just passed has been skeptical indeed of the joys and powers of the spiritual life. It has been a commercial age, valuing life in terms of abundant possessions. Men were not bankrupted by the loss of their souls. It has been an individualistic, selfish period. Freedom, power, happiness, self-assertion, were the great desiderata. Men felt little need for prayer and the forgiveness of sins. It has been a rationalistic age. The *Zeitgeist* had little faith that piety could lay hold on invisible sources of personal power. It was classed with the vagaries of the shallow-brained. The soul fared ill in such a "practical" age. Psychology tended to explain prayer as a psychic phenomenon, the activity

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

of the self within the self, a pure subjectivity, a mere tugging at one's boot-straps. Physical science registered the existence of no invisible world; no chemistry tabulated its elements, no astronomy charted its location. Naturalistic philosophy was willing, to be sure, to effect a division of labor with poetry, but insisted that its ideals, though pretty, could not be proven. And all the time business, without serious interruptions or interferences, went on supplying the market with everything the heart could desire to eat and to drink and to be merry with. Never did man seem so prosperous and so well satisfied with himself!

But of all the wonders of creation the most awe-inspiring is the soul of man; and most marvelous of all the soul's wonders is the range and scope of its activities and needs. The vast designs of business and war, the astonishing creations of philosophy and art, the delicacy and the power of poetry and music, the heights and depths of love, the whole cycle of the passions, the sublime capacity for self-abnegation, the curiosity to know and the will to live and do—no Goethe or Shakespeare can compass all that is in the soul of man.

Our inventories of life's values are apt, therefore, to fall short of completeness, and our reasons

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

for valuing life are prone to a lack of finality. For the whole contents of man defies enumeration by a single part of man, and life is ever bigger than logic. For instance, our catalogue of the reasons for duty is often strikingly deficient. A hopeful doctor of philosophy scarcely out of adolescence once asserted sapiently that the only reason for conjugal constancy was that one might know his own offspring. As a matter of fact, virtue has, as Westermarck has shown, biological roots older and deeper than human existence; and Fiske has shown us that the family relation bears as its fruitage the holiest and best things of human life. In the light of these facts the flippant young professor's philosophy seems partial indeed.

Such mistakes, however, we are very prone to make. Thus ideals that can never be verified are often valid symbols of unseen realities. The ideal of a rescued sepulcher or of a westward route to the East Indies could not, indeed, have borne inspection, but they validly symbolized all that afterward grew out of activity in their behalf, namely, the revival of learning in one case, and the whole civilization of the western hemisphere in the other. The Christian ideals of heaven, of the Kingdom of God, of sanctification, have never been surveyed and

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

charted; but they do stand, nevertheless, as valid symbols of we know not what. Let them continue to motivate endeavor and bring forth their beneficent consequences, as they have done in ages past; for there is more reality in visions and ideals than is dreamed of in the skeptical philosophy of the day, and the epoch that omits religion from its inventory of values is presently avenged in the shallowness or even decadence of its own life.

Yes, Horatio, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.

There are more invisible powers available for our inner life than are reckoned by the rash skepticism of the age. For are we not segments of a greater circle? "Me poinitet," the Latin had it. Other verbs also called for a like unpersonal idiom, as if the soul, swept by certain emotions and passions, recognized itself passive rather than active; handled, as it were, a mere individual atom, by forces cosmic and universal. There are indeed forces at work within us that are not of us. What shall we say, for instance, of our instincts? Are they not manifestations of laws and powers that do not depend for their existence upon our having been born to manifest them? How, further, can the perception of outer things occur within us, to interpret to

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

us the things that are without, unless there be some connection which we ourselves did not create between the inner and the outer? What, again, are those Kantian categories of the mental life *a priori* to our thinking? Without them we could not think at all, and yet before we are they were, from everlasting to everlasting, even as the Creator Himself, who is their source. What, once more, are those principles of logic according to which we think? They too are in us, but not of us; yet without them we could not think at all. They too are, in a large sense, not of us, but of the over-world of which we partake, and which is ■ part of each of us.

So likewise in the spiritual world the soul completes itself because it partakes of powers not of itself, powers that ever were and shall be for evermore, and of which all finite souls partake. Faith and prayer, assurance of forgiveness, mystical insight, and prophetic vision may, indeed, puzzle the metaphysicians; but by them the powers of the invisible world are made available, and the greatest moral triumphs do occur, both in individual lives and the social order.

And if one rests intellectually ill content until these powers of the invisible world be named, let him venture to name them just as his mother taught

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

him at her knee to name them: God! Metaphysics can not consistently offer any serious demur to that name, for it has no better nomenclature to suggest. Indeed, the history of philosophy for the last three thousand years consists mostly in following first this great thinker, and then that one into various speculative leads, only to demonstrate each in turn a blind pocket. What little gold they have found they have, one by one, poured molten into the form of that great name. The last century has conceded the insoluble contradictions of materialistic atheism, while the drift of idealism has been steadily in the direction of personalism. Meantime the ancient ineffable Name, ever on the reverent lips of faith, has led the van of social progress from Galilee to the Golden Gate, and now returns to light the awakening Orient.

And among ourselves men in search of more depth of life and spiritual power are turning to God in ever-increasing numbers and passionate eagerness. For the spiritual life does lay hold on power. It does bear fruit, and its fruits are not only individual, they are social as well. And if we fail to explain how it can bear fruit, it is only necessary to point out the fruits that it has borne. If its proofs are not speculative they are pragmatic.

But after all we shall not have to look far to dis-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

cover in part why this is so. For the spiritual life, like the intellectual life and the cultural life, diverts attention and activity from primitive, anti-social interests to acquired interests that are socializing. Our primitive, animal, untaught interests are interests of hunger and passion and of savage strife; and if we devote our attentions and activities to these, and these alone, we inevitably clash with one another, and social chaos must result. But as Professor Ross wittily, though almost irreverently, says, the exerciser of dogs in training would be wise not to throw them a bone, but rather to set them baying the moon. For there might not be bone enough to go around, whereas there would be plenty of moon for all. So with the higher intellectual culture and spiritual interests of man. Attention and activity devoted to them seldom breed disagreements or generate friction. Just to the degree that we occupy ourselves with these higher interests, to that degree does social order develop. And of all these acquired socializing interests to which men may devote their attention, and from which they may secure happiness, the religious interests are most cheaply produced and distributed among the common people. It requires tremendous effort and capital to distribute widely all the products of science, philosophy, literature,

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

and art; but men pray instinctively, the religious life is spontaneous, and a revival can sweep through a whole population redirecting the energies of the masses as nothing else can do.

But the religious life is far more than a mere harmless diversion, a mere plaything with which children can be amused, so as to keep them out of mischief. It is positively socializing in a score of different ways. This may be especially and emphatically said of the Christian religion. For its uniqueness and grandeur consists precisely in this, that it harnesses the religious activities and emotions to social sentiments, ideals, and enterprises. It stimulates instincts of sympathy and love, not only by its standards, but by the emotions that it generates. Thus men are motivated to lives of spontaneous and positive goodness, they are bound together by mutual spiritual interests of the most intimate and tender sort. Thus the world's capital of love is immeasurably augmented, and its liability to hatred immeasurably decreased.

Again, the religious life, especially the Christian life, renders the heart right as nothing else can possibly do. It places its emphasis upon sincerity and good intentions as the prime requisites. And here, again, it stimulates these virtues with emotions that

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

can not be tabulated. It strengthens, moreover, the will by its very access to those higher and invisible powers which no man can explain. Thus it makes men over, and from what has already been said of the social value of individual morality, its social value must appear.

Not only so, but—and this is most important of all—religion always and everywhere has been characterized by its power to seize upon ideals, enterprises, and causes, and marshal thereto fervor and enthusiasm that are incalculable. History is full of instances: the pilgrimages of the Buddhists, the conquests of the Mohammedans, the fanatical crusades of the Albigenses, and so on without limit. This fervor and activity, often tremendous, though sometimes fanatical, may be tamed and harnessed to the cause of social welfare. It may be made to motivate the individual moral regeneration of whole populations in behalf of social ideals, and it may be utilized in behalf of social justice.

But why should it be attempted here to complete the list of reasons why the spiritual life regenerates men and thus regenerates society? This is not an argument, and even if it were it could gain nothing by exhaustiveness, if that were possible. Suffice it, therefore, to assert again what in our heart of hearts

The Social Fruits of the Spiritual Life

we all believe, that the spiritual life does get hold on invisible power. And having asserted, let us turn to history, for history bears eloquent testimony to the social fruitage of the spiritual life. The great revivals of personal religion have always been fruitful of social consequences. One illustration may suffice. Green in his "Short History of the English People" devotes several pages to the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century. He says: "Religion carried to the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal, while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave-trade, and gave impulse to popular education. . . . In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm which, rigid and pedantic as it often seemed, was still healthy in its social tone, and its power was seen in the disappearance of the profligacy which had disgraced the upper class and the foulness which had infested the literature ever since the restoration. . . . A yet nobler result of the religious revival was the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, ignorance, physical suffering, social degradation of the profligate and the poor."

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

Such instances might be multiplied without number, but it is unnecessary. Our social ills are somewhat different from those of England in the eighteenth century, but they are no less serious, and probably no less amenable to such ameliorating influences. Who can estimate the work of such a revival of personal religion sweeping over America during this generation?

But let us return to the two religious messages with reference to which we began: the one a plea for the social application of Christianity, typified in its chief present representative, Rauschenbusch, the other a plea for the spiritual life, its representative, Professor Eucken. One message is almost exclusively social, the other almost exclusively individual. But let us discern clearly that they do not contradict nor discount one another. Instead they are mutually supplementary. Each needs the other, and the people need them both. We need more social ends to actuate our personal religion; we need more personal spirituality to vitalize our social religion. If these two messages, blended together in causal connection, as they must be if either is to be vital, are taken seriously to heart by clergy and people, they will together under God redeem the times.

VI

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

A SELF-CALCULATING ethic falls very far short of giving a full account of human nature. Self-renunciation is a phenomenon connected with the most deep-seated instincts of man, and is therefore older, much older, than the race. Biology furnishes abundant testimony to this significant fact. The utterly rash defense of their young by animal mothers, and the battles of the ants in which individuals seem to count for nothing, are cases in which the first law of nature seems to be set aside. But without this instinct the species would perish.

The human race inherits it. However universal selfishness may be, this other instinct of self-abnegation ever remains, asserting itself at unexpected times and places, often most sublimely. How else can we account for the heroisms of war, and the weary, unending toil of parents for their children? And whoever has observed the face of a youth in whose soul there was transpiring the agony of consecration to some great ideal may well consider what this passion is worth to the world. For

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

without vicarious sacrifice social salvation is impossible. History is full of it.

The opinion is advanced by some that it is wrong for society to accept gratis the self-sacrificing devotion of Catholic nurses. Perhaps this opinion is valid; still there is something in the priest's reply who said, "But the spirit of self-sacrifice must be kept alive in the world!" Indeed, how bereft of its best things the world would at last become if this noble passion should cease to master and mold many of the choicest souls of every generation! An interesting catalogue might be made of the precious possessions which this passion has contributed to the world. It vitalized ancient Hebrew prophetism. It motivated that missionary zeal which evangelized all Europe by the end of the tenth century, and promises to evangelize all the world by the end of the twentieth. Had no one been willing to die for Liberty, democracy could never have grown to such proportions. Stories came to us from the East of how young Japanese soldiers had confided fervently to their English-speaking friends that they hoped to die in Manchuria. Then we understood why Japanese losses in a charge could be one hundred per cent, but a column could not be repulsed.

For the leadership of great reforms this spirit

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

is absolutely necessary. "How, then, mark the true prophet from the false? How tell the disinterested sage from the ambitious impostor? The masses have met this difficulty by applying the rude but effective test of *renunciation*. They will not receive a sterner ideal unless the author renounces all that common men strive for. The false prophet makes his success the stepping-stone to power and ease, while the true prophet puts the world beneath his feet. Hence, the locust and the wild honey, the staff and the sheep-skin, have always been the sure credentials of the moral reformer."* On the other hand, an evangelist who knows how to develop a mob-craze and then capitalize it at tens of thousands of dollars, can hardly expect the benediction of posterity.

It may be that the real contribution of the clergy of our day to social welfare and progress is in direct proportion to the degree of this spirit which actuates it. The temptations were never greater than in an epoch like ours for clergymen to become sordidly professionalized; and many, no doubt, have gradually succumbed to the subtle temptation.

The various new forms of philanthropy and social engineering now developing have given rise

*Ross, "Social Control," p. 359.

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

to a new profession, which might be termed the profession of social service. Schools have already been established to train young men and women for this profession. The demand for such young persons exceeds the supply, and is increasing; but the pay is usually small. The passion of altruistic devotion must be relied upon to furnish recruits. Consecration is the door to this service. Upon the response depends in considerable measure the Christianization of the social order.

But if in our modern society we need the spirit of self-denial as a qualification for reform leaders, we need it much more in the very texture of our whole life. The atmosphere is charged with selfish individualism, which, as has been pointed out, is eating at the vitals of our institutions. We shall never recover until we reinstate in some measure at least the austere, rigorous virtue of a stricter generation. The prevailing tendency nowadays seems to be to satisfy the cravings of human nature for happiness, pleasure or self-gratification, without any very deep or far-sighted regard to consequences. Naturally, therefore, the world is full of the forms of moral laxness repeatedly referred to, and which constitute the disintegrating agencies of our times. Blue laws

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

no doubt are extreme; and the puritanical rigor that voluntarily accepts the standards which blue laws are designed to impose upon the unwilling is a harsh one, to be sure; but that rigor makes an adamantine virtue fit for the foundations of a great civilization. Too little such lime in the superstructure may imperil the walls. Such austerity is the prime moral need of our age. It alone can furnish us incorruptible judges, honest legislators, and faithful executives. Nothing less can eliminate infidelity from our public life, and put our business life on the moral level demanded by the deepest needs and best insight of the age. And only this can restore the creed upon which the family is built. For it is always the seductive lure of illicit self-gratification that draws us from the straight course; and unless one's philosophy of life is beaten firmly into the warp of self-restraint, he will hardly be able to stifle the passion of temptation.

We are accustomed to cast slanting remarks at the austeries of our fathers, and caricature the peculiarities of dress, speech, and manner that were associated with their austeries. The final footing of the columns may, however, show a balance to their accounts; and the time may come when we

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

shall be characterized non-conductors of civilization. Doubtless the purple-clad Romans of the later amphitheater poked fun at Cincinnatus.

The decadence of this spirit of self-denial we find referred to in most unexpected places. For instance, in a recently-issued treatise on educational theory may be found the following sentences:

"To see to it that the ideals which accumulated human experience has shown to be worthy and to make for social welfare, are safely and effectively transmitted from generation to generation is obviously a prime task of education. The decline of the ancient civilizations is generally recognized as having been due to the fact that the races which had so laboriously built up these civilizations failed to transmit from generation to generation the ideals that were essential to their perpetuation. Chief among these are the ideals of self-denial and self-sacrifice—those essential standards of human conduct that have made all advancement possible. It is because material prosperity eliminates the conditions which give vitality and emotive force to these ideals,—it is for this reason that material prosperity, unless checked and controlled by educative forces, tends to national and ethnic decay. Both Greece and Rome lacked an organized edu-

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

tional institution that would automatically instill these ideals into each generation. It remains to be seen whether modern education will be adequate to the task. Certain it is that the present tendencies in our schools toward ease and comfort and the lines of least resistance confirm rather than counteract the operation of the *Zeitgeist* which reflects so perfectly the moral decadence that comes with prosperity—the letting loose the grip that our forefathers, who lived under sterner and harsher conditions, had upon the ideals of self-denial and self-sacrifice.”*

Moreover, the lack of these ideals shows its consequences in the most remote and unexpected ways. Take, for instance, the tendency of our society to stratify into classes. Scarcely anything could be more undesirable in a democracy, for history warns us ominously of the volcanic upheavals that ultimately break up these crusts. However validly we may charge such formations to economic forces, it still remains true that the psychology of the thing is the love of display, the pride of emulation, and the lust of personal power. However prime a requisite to the prevention of this caste-formation a proper distribution of economic reward

* Bagley, “Educational Values,” p. 60.

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

and opportunity may be, it must be seen also that renunciation and humility are factors worth considering on their own account. Advice about the appropriate treatment of poor men in vile raiment as compared with men in gold rings and goodly apparel is, indeed, quite counter to human nature; but after all it actuates brotherhoods in the obscure corners of Ephesus and Corinth, which later become the leaven of the world.

Cause-loyalty and rigid renunciation of personal interests and inclinations are the key also to the labor problem.

The growth of population always tends to oversupply the labor market. The purchasers of labor take advantage of the resulting competition among laborers to beat the price of labor down to bare means of subsistence. Consequently the sellers of labor have always been exploited by the buyers of labor. Slavery and serfdom are historic forms of that exploitation; wage-oppression is the contemporaneous form. The great trusts may easily become the greatest oppressors, because they have the greatest advantage over individual laborers.

To stand together and sell their labor collectively are the laborers' only escape from this oppression. The tremendous power that in this way

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

labor could exert in its own behalf is really quite startling. There need be no limit to labor's share in production except the productivity of labor, if only all laborers would submerge their personal interests to the interests of their class.

Laborers are disqualified for such co-operation by natural human selfishness, and by the brutalizing vices to which they are so apt to be addicted. Our liquor system not only loads the laboring man's beer bucket with the federal taxes the trusts should bear, but also debauches him beyond the capacity for efficient organization against those that hire him.

If the leaders and the rank and file of labor could become imbued with a pious passion for their cause like that which characterized Cromwell's brigade, their contribution to the cause of industrial democracy might be more commensurate with the contribution of Cromwell and his men to the cause of political democracy.

And, I dare say, the secret of individual happiness is also to be found here. Perhaps a unique and effective illustration of this fact may be found in the vogue and acceptability of Spinoza's philosophy. For, when some great thinker's guess at the ultimate mystery of life and things enjoys wide currency over a long period of time, it may be pretty

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

certainly assumed that there is a core of truth in it which satisfies the needs of human nature. Spinoza's system is fatalistic and pantheistic in its metaphysical aspects; but its ethical outcome is in what he calls the love of God. By this he really means a willing, submissive absorption in and obedience to Nature. "Our life is a battle between surrender to the phenomenal world and ascent to the world of reality, obstinate clinging to petty individualism and willing absorption in Infinite Being. . . . Spinoza feels the traditional ideals of conduct to be unbearably small and petty, since, whatever the breadth they may seem to have, they do not take man out of himself and the sphere of his own ideas, interests, and emotions."*

For purposes of our adjustment to society and the social awakening, as well as to our own inner selves, we might paraphrase Spinoza's thought by asserting that the secret of life is to be found in closer intimacy with the social cosmos and absorption in its evolution.

Self-denial seldom manifests itself except in connection with some strong instinct. It can not, therefore, be made to order, but results as a by-product from the stimulation of the instinct. The three in-

*Eucken, "The Problem of Human Life," pp. 373, 378.

The Social Benefits of Self-Denial

stincts with which it most commonly displays itself are fighting, the parental instincts, and religion.

It is the last of these with which we are now concerned. Any student of the ethnic religions is familiar with the phenomena of self-inflicted tortures and fanatical devotion to superstitious enterprises that take heavy toll of life. As for our own religion, who can forget what it has cost its devotees!

It is characteristic of the Christian religion that it seized upon this, as upon other socializing instincts, magnified and idealized it, and so gave it tremendous force in the world. This feature of Christianity, however, is hardly recognized in these days, because the spirit of the times is so contrary to it. Nor do we fully appreciate the emphasis that early Christianity placed upon self-denial. So extreme is the emphasis to-day upon social religion and programs for the betterment of this world that the other-worldly character of apostolic and patristic Christianity is largely forgotten. We also interpret this element out of the teachings of Jesus Himself, thereby doing violence to His thought.

But as a matter of fact, the early Christians were dwellers in tents. They were but pilgrims here, journeying home to an abiding country. It was not

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

the visible, but the invisible world which was real to them. So temporary, indeed, was the world, so transient their lives in it, that nothing of weal or woe was counted of much consequence. It was only under the inspiration of this faith that they were able to bear what they had to bear. If the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church, it follows that without this spirit of self-denial Christianity could never have taken root in the world.

What was true of the early Church has been more or less true at every epoch in her history. And if by lightening the emphasis upon other-worldliness we should lose the motive for self-denial, it would be a sorry shift indeed for the world that now is. There ought to be no danger, however; for the increasing social interest, not to say passion, of the present time, together with the more enlightened insight into the social consequences of self-indulgence, ought to more than make up for the lack of that early, semi-fanatical other-worldliness. And it is devoutly to be hoped that religion may assume a form in America and take on a fervor that shall revive its early spirit of self-denial. Consecration is a good word yet!

VII

The Social Function of the Church

The Social Function of the Church

EDUCATORS are guided in their professional work by a philosophy of education in which there is formulated a systematic theory of the ends of education, the means and methods adapted to each of the various ends, and the relative value of the respective means and ends. This body of standardized theory is of great value, for it rescues our educational system from the blunders and waste of empiricism.

The clergy also seriously needs such a philosophy, some authorized and well-grounded and thoroughly-worked-out concensus of opinion as to what the Church is for, how the ends for which it exists are to be realized, and the relative value and importance of the various kinds of Church activity. Unfortunately, however, they do not possess such a philosophy of the ecclesiastical function. The result is great confusion. Various conceptions of the ends and aims of ecclesiastical activity are more or less explicitly held by this one or that one. A great variety of new theories abound which lead to experi-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

mentation; or the older and traditional perpetuates itself through sheer inertia. But nowhere is there any balance, adjustment, or authority.

To illustrate the condition referred to and at the same time introduce the problem of the Church's social function, there might be enumerated two different and apparently contradictory theories as to the Church's function which are commonly in vogue. First, that the Church exists in order to save individuals from hell; second, that its business is to reconstruct and save the social order.

The first of these dominated the Middle Ages and is still extant among us. It explains the vast majority of Church activities of the past, and perhaps also of the present as well. As held in its extreme form, it utterly ignores and sometimes explicitly denies the second end mentioned.

The second, on the other hand, has enjoyed an immense vogue of late, though it may have had some incidental recognition always. As now advocated in some quarters, however, there is some tendency manifested to make it imply complete repudiation of the latter.

It will be seen that on the basis of either of these two theories alone there inevitably arises uncertainty and confusion, and that uncertainty often

The Social Function of the Church

avenges itself in practice by the inadequacy and incompleteness of the work resulting.

An attempt to compromise these two theories might be stated somewhat as follows: that the business of the Church is to make men fit either for society or for heaven. But here again the necessity for a thoroughly worked out philosophy of the Church's function is evident. For this proposition assumes that fitness for society is fitness for heaven. But, abandoning this assumption and the puzzles that it might lead to, another puzzle may be noted which is involved in the proposition; viz., whether the Church should approach the individual directly or through his environment. And if directly, should it be by inspiration chiefly, or by instruction, regimen, habituation, etc. And if indirectly through society, the question arises whether society or the individual is, in the last analysis, the end of its activity.

But it is only the intent here to suggest the desirability of such a system of thought as has been referred to, and to hint at some of the problems involved in it. Manifestly, if these puzzles could be reduced, and a systematic philosophy of the Church's function provided, we should be able to reduce the various activities of the Church to a much more just

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

proportion, and so accomplish incomparably more with a given amount of energy expended.

Without attempting, however, to answer the theoretical questions raised, let us proceed to some discussion of the social function of the Church. We may, perhaps, safely begin by laying down the proposition that there are two ways at least in which the Church may proceed in the performance of its social function. The first is the endeavor to better society directly by changing for the better social conditions and social organs. The second is to better society indirectly by improving the individuals that compose society.

The first of these is of great importance. It is the aim of the modern social awakening. It is the gist of social religion in the present stage of its development. It characterizes the spirit of the age. This social aim is motivating as never before all our intellectual activities: science, politics, literature, philanthropy, as well as religion. There are various ways in which the Church may seek to assist in this contemporaneous movement for the betterment of society. She may preach the social ideal and point out its place in the thought of the Founder, thus inspiring with this socio-religious motive millions of people who can be reached in no other way. This

The Social Function of the Church

the Church is doing as a matter of fact. Countless sermons have been preached during the past decade on the social application of Christianity. Millions of Christian people have been interested in the social teachings of Jesus and have read books on social religion.

Another thing that the Church can do is to co-operate with philanthropic enterprise and reform movement. This also she is doing to a degree that perhaps is not adequately appreciated. Through the Federal Council of Churches she has taken a stand for the minimum wage; through the National Child-labor Committee, for the betterment of working conditions; the churches also have co-operated largely in the anti-vice campaign, and are taking an important part in the agitation for accident-indemnity laws. Many further activities of this kind might be enumerated.

Such co-operation as this with philanthropy and reforms, it may be noted, are not usually local enterprises for the local Church, but instead are causes which, like the missionary cause, must be furthered through the central agencies of a whole denomination, or even by several denominations in co-operation with one another. Denominational alignment for a great enterprise has been successfully accom-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

plished by modern Christendom in the interests of foreign missions, and to some extent in the interests of temperance. These lessons as to what may be accomplished in behalf of a great cause by inter-denominational alignment and mutual co-operation should be pondered well. For they suggest to all thoughtful advocates of social reform what may be accomplished by the Churches for such causes as child-labor, industrial accidents, eugenics, and a score of other social interests, if the whole body of Christians could unite effectively in their behalf, as they have been able to unite and co-operate in behalf of foreign missions. We already have the beginnings of organizations to that end, notably the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. There is no more inspiring subject for meditation than to consider what can be accomplished in behalf of the practical interests of the Kingdom when this alignment shall have been perfected.

Another thing that must come and will naturally come as a by-product of the movements we have just been speaking of, will be the elimination of denominational competition and the waste accompanying it. We seriously need a redistribution of ecclesiastical energy and activity from over-churched rural districts, where the competitive struggle is

The Social Function of the Church

wasting men, money, and devotion, to the unchurched and neglected slums of our great cities. Thousands of young ministers are laboring in country places oppressed beyond expression by the realization that the little community in which they live would be as well or better off if their own Churches were removed entirely and the field left to those that remain. These same young men, many of them, have seen the social vision and are praying daily with almost passionate entreaties that opportunity may be given them to devote their services to the social regeneration and salvation of our great neglected centers. Here is perhaps the most pressing problem in religious strategy that now presents itself to our captains of ecclesiasticism.

Perhaps the form in which the problem of the Church's social function presents itself most frequently, especially to that class of young clergymen to whom reference has just been made, is the question of what the local Church can do in matters of local social service and activity. Feeling the call of the social ideal, but failing to realize either that the chief social work of the Church must be done either through denominational co-operation with the reforms just mentioned, or through the regeneration of individuals, to which we shall proceed in a mo-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

ment, these young men have often sought to transform their local Churches into philanthropic and charitable institutions or into social centers. This tendency has given rise to the institutional Church in the city and to the community-life Church in the country.

While the social aspiration that has given rise to these experiments is no doubt laudable in the highest degree, still it must be conceded that this zeal has often developed in a one-sided, fanatical way. Perhaps more of these enterprises have failed than have succeeded, so that the whole question of the adequacy and permanence of this kind of Church work is still in question.

The Church, however, is not the only institution thus embarrassed by the rise of this new social zeal. A few years ago in one of the Central States of the Middle West there gathered at a well-known center of pedagogical learning a large group of persons, mostly young women, under the auspices of a new and enthusiastic organization known as the Country Teachers' Association. The inspiring genius of this meeting was a person of charming grace and magnetic personality, who was full of enthusiasm for the country-life movement. This leader was able to see visions and dream dreams as to the possibilities of

The Social Function of the Church

country-life improvement and the function and opportunity of the country school teacher in connection therewith. The whole program was inspirational in the extreme, and the ideal carried the delegates to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. At the critical moment in the program, just as the young teachers were pledging themselves to exert their influence in the districts to which they were about to go, in behalf of the movement under consideration, there presented himself before the audience a middle-aged man of striking appearance. His face was cadaverous and somewhat cynical in its expression, but his eye was keen and twinkled with humor and common sense. He proved to be a prominent educational official of the State, and with a speech markedly suggestive of the Fatherland he spoke as follows:

"We are here to-day on the Mountain of Transfiguration. Let us build three dabernagles, etc." Thus he proceeded, gradually and humorously feeling his way to a mastery of the situation, which by tact and skill he at length secured. The general drift of his remarks may be surmised from the concluding paragraph of his extemporaneous address, which was as follows:

"The business of the country school teacher is to teach school. If she makes good at that she

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

might perhaps interest the farmers a little in better roads and better social life. But if she begins by making a hobby of rural community building, like as not she 'll forget to deach the children to read. Then de directors vill say, 'Another fool from the normal school.' "

The present situation in the Church relative to social activities is not altogether different from that suggested by this incident. The present writer must confess that he went away from that convention of teachers with a paraphrased version of the German pedagogue's philosophy ringing in his ears. "The business of the breacher is to breach the gospel." And this philosophy may well impress itself deeply upon the minds of the contemporaneous clergy. They may well repeat again and again in thoughtful soliloquy, "The business of the preacher is to preach the gospel."

And this leads us to the second way in which the Church may improve society, namely, by improving the character of the individuals who compose society. It is in this way that the preaching of the gospel has far more significant social consequences than many of us are apt to realize. The social value of the ordinary work of the ordinary Church is not to be judged by its conscious social aims alone, for

The Social Function of the Church

it may well be that it is not consciously social in its aims. Its social significance is rather to be judged from the standpoint of its social effects. And it is to these that consideration here is to be directed. For a vast amount of social betterment may be accomplished simply by improving the character of the individuals who compose society. And this ordinary work the Church actually accomplishes with remarkable efficiency.

The Church sets up and maintains from generation to generation the moral standards so necessary to the maintenance of social order. It approves or disapproves the members of the community with respect to their conformity to these standards, and succeeds in a remarkable degree in pressing its appraisals upon the whole community. It teaches not only adults, but the children of each rising generation the thou-shalts and the thou-shalt-nots of the moral law perhaps more universally and effectively than any other social organ could possibly do.

Moreover, the Church inculcates beliefs and faiths which motivate human behavior to an incomparable degree. These beliefs and faiths permeate the whole community and constitute an important element of the social atmosphere. Nobody has to explain these beliefs in the course of conversation

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

with his neighbor; he assumes that his neighbor understands them and perhaps accepts them, and that assumption is valid because of the work of the Church. These beliefs and faiths are with men in solitude as well as in society, and patrol their behavior while the policeman is asleep.

But perhaps the most significant of all is the body of spiritual ideals and feelings which the Church in all the centuries has fostered. Emotions and ideals—and an ideal is but a great proposition emotionally conceived—are the mainspring of human activity. When these enthusiasms dwindle, life is dwarfed and its value sinks to a low ebb. Then the appetites and passions of the baser nature break from their restraints, and chaos and pandemonium are the program of the day?

Thus the Church stands like a sentinel from age to age guarding the citadel of social order.

Not only may it be said that this is the function of the Church, but it may also be added that only as the agency of this function is institutionalized can it perform the function. The tasks of social control do not, many of them, perform themselves. On the other hand, they are performed by institutions, and these institutions must be built upon solid, substantial foundations of organization and support. Other-

The Social Function of the Church

wise the old adage that what is everybody's business is nobody's business is illustrated again, and presently the function ceases to be performed. However imperfect the Church may be as to its organization and personnel (and what else could be expected among faulty human beings?), it is not imperfect with respect to its ideals. But these ideals would gradually fade away were they not conserved and promulgated by a stable institution organized and maintained for that very purpose.

And the efficiency with which the Church has performed this function is the very reason why we fail to perceive the function itself. Our whole social atmosphere is so permeated with what the Church has contributed to it that we are as unconscious of it as we are unconscious of the air and the sunshine, and for precisely the same reasons. This moral atmosphere which the Church has generated is the very medium in which we live and, unconscious of it, devote our attention to our every-day affairs. But notice how these moral standards do permeate the community. In the dooryard of the humble or in the nurseries of the rich accost any child of a dozen years of age and ask him what is right or wrong, and why, and you will presently learn that immediately or by proxy he has been sitting at the feet of

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

the Church. The readiness with which hypocrites in the Church are condemned by those outside the Church is convincing evidence of the success with which the Church has performed her task of teaching all the world what the Christian virtues are. Nor are we to estimate the Church's influence in the community solely by the numbers who frequent the church-building itself. For we are well aware that the large percentage of the people, even those who have not darkened the door of the church for many years, are yet fairly well informed as to what ideals and hopes, beliefs and faiths, and moral standards the Church stands for. Moreover, they are far from being unmoved by the public opinion which the Church has generated. No better illustration of this fact can be cited than the all but universal demand in time of death for a religious funeral.

Again, imagine the Church eliminated from the community. How, then, would these motives and standards of behavior, these foundations of social order, be maintained? The public school by common consent is deplorably inadequate to the task, not only in America, where religious instruction is debarred, but also in Europe, where it is explicitly fostered. Literature and the theater could not be relied upon to supply the deficiency, for they both

The Social Function of the Church

cater notoriously to the commercial demand, vending that which sells the best. And it is a historic fact, instanced, for example, by the English literature of the eighteenth century, that a corrupt age demands corrupt literature. Law and the police could not meet the need, for they can only repress the occasional offender, and their success depends upon the spontaneous good behavior of the vast majority. Tradition might be relied upon for a time, but only for a time. Religion and morals could not die out, to be sure, for the first is an instinct of human nature, and the second is a social necessity without which civilization can not continue. Nature would in time reassert herself, therefore, and the institutions which we have imagined eliminated, or something designed with an identical end in view, would spring spontaneously into existence again.

The most significant testimonial to the social effects of the Church's ordinary ministration to the moral and spiritual needs of individuals may be gathered from the history of the Dark Ages. During this period the work of the Church was devoted almost exclusively to individuals. The social functions of the Church and of religion were almost totally undreamed of, so much so that for centuries the ideal held up was that the best possible life and

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

the most proper means of salvation was the most complete withdrawal from society. Nevertheless it was during these centuries that the Church accomplished the most important social function that she has ever accomplished, and perhaps the most important function that has ever been accomplished by any institution. For notice, at the date of the downfall of Rome the world was populated with the demoralized and decadent Roman peoples and the barbarous invaders from the north. These two races were in violent conflict, and all the safeguards of life, property, and happiness were destroyed together in the general catastrophe. Almost nothing remained intact but the Christian Church, to which the Romans gave spiritual allegiance, and to which the Germans either had been converted or were to be converted in a few centuries. The task that confronted the Church, the task that characterized the Middle Ages was to tame, civilize, and socialize the violent elements of this turbulent society, training them to social order and laying the foundations for modern civilization.

Of this outlook the Church of the sixth century was almost totally ignorant. She was also totally unaware of the fact that this task confronted her. She was, instead, imbued with the purpose of pro-

The Social Function of the Church

tecting her property and her devotees, and saving the souls of the people, both Roman and barbarian, from hell. These tasks she sought to accomplish by bringing the minds of the barbarians into the most abject submission to her creeds and ritual. This she succeeded in doing, and there followed a thousand years of ecclesiastical authority and subordination of the individual will to that authority in all matters of intellectual and spiritual interest. And the result every student of history well knows. Little by little she developed the intellectual and moral life of the European peoples. Gradually they became civilized, until the social task of the mediæval Church bore full fruitage in the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the rise of modern democracy.

And all this may well be taken as a type of the social service that is always being accomplished by the Church that performs its usual tasks from age to age, and which is, of course, augmented with increased activity and influence on the part of the Church.

There are hundreds of ministers who are oppressed with the burden and futility of their work. They are discouraged because they see neither souls being saved in large numbers nor social work being

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

accomplished. The chief necessity of such men is an enlargement of their conception of the Church's function, and a deeper insight into the social consequences of the moral and spiritual life to the fostering of which the Church devotes herself from year to year. Let such ministers live the spiritual life themselves, and minister to the spiritual needs of the people. Let them keep their churches painted and the church-bells ringing, thus presenting, as it were, pleasing sensory symbols of the spiritual life to the ears and eyes of the populace. Let them preach the gospel faithfully every Sunday to such as willingly come to the church, gathering in as many as they can. Let them see that as large a fraction as possible of the children are taught from week to week the fundamentals of Christian faith, morals, and ideals. Let them visit the homes of the people and befriend such people as will welcome their friendship. Let them marry happy lovers and baptize innocent children. Let them bury the dead and invoke the divine blessing upon all social functions where they are invited to do so. Let them surround themselves with as large a constituency as possible of faithful Christian Church members. And let them remember that the same thing is being done in every village and in every ward of every city in the

The Social Function of the Church

whole broad land. Let them thus feel themselves companioned by an innumerable host of those who are doing the same work as they, a work more vital to the stability of society and the moral and social progress of mankind than any other work whatsoever.

And let the conscientious layman who helps to pay the bills and do the work of the Church and exemplify the Christian life take heart. For it is through such as he that the social application of Christianity is most effectively being accomplished.

Let this part of the discussion be concluded, therefore, with two special pleas. The first is for the evangelization of the un-churched centers of our population, those congested sections of our great cities which have been so aptly characterized as "folk swamps." If the circuit-rider evangelizing the rural slums of our frontier three-quarters of a century ago exerted as great an influence upon the morals and intelligence of the settlers as he is credited by some of our historians with doing, why is not the urban slum amenable to similar influences? As a matter of fact, what Peter Cartwright did among the swamps of Central Illinois, Booth has done among the folk-swamps of London. Our cities need social settlements, but some of those who

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

have conducted the most successful social settlements are reputed to have confessed that the people need even more the preaching of the gospel.

The second plea is in behalf of the children and their devotion to the Church. It is of the greatest importance that they be taught by precept and by example to frequent the services of the Church and revere its teachings and influence. It will be a great day for America and for American life and civilization when a preponderating majority of her children have learned to sing in sweet childish simplicity:

“I love Thy church, O God!
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye
And graven on Thy hand.”

VIII

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

THE pessimist and the calamity howler are the most unwelcome members of American society. The prediction that the country is going to the dogs furnishes perennial grist for the funny-paper mill. Our conceit prefers the superlatives of the typical old-time orator with his "grandest civilization upon which the sun ever shone," and his "sublimest heroism that was ever displayed upon the bloody field of battle." We are confident that our resources are limitless and our future immeasurably glorious. Are not we of Anglo-Saxon blood in this the United States of America?

It irritates us a little to be told that our public out-door charities fail because we are gifted with the most administrative awkwardness of any civilized people in the world. It really angers us to be laughed at by the Germans because of our backwardness in the practical application of science. We are a trifle chagrined to compare our military sanitation and our death rates in Cuba with the Japanese

record in Manchuria. It is a rather rude awakening to be urged in the midst of a political campaign to favor progressive legislation that Europe has had in successful operation for more than a generation. Our inability to see the hole in the doughnut is droll indeed. But since blind optimism is one of the symptoms of tuberculosis, the friend who warns against dampness, darkness, and dirt should hardly be stigmatized for the unpardonable sin of blind pessimism.

There probably never has been an age of greater promise than the present. That promise of the future is based upon an unparalleled material development, upon rising democracy, upon increasing intelligence and the development of science, and upon an expanding sympathy and humanitarianism. Considering what we have succeeded in accomplishing in the last two centuries, and the capital that we have acquired for further progress, it does seem gratuitous indeed to suggest the possibility of ultimate failure and collapse on the part of our splendid civilization. But there have been other periods of achievement and progress. The most notable among these perhaps are the period of the Greek enlightenment and the period of the Renaissance. Nevertheless the promise of both of these epochs was disappointed. The historic tragedy occurred,

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

in the first instance, of a civilization gradually crumbling into decay, and in the second instance the bright promises of progress were postponed for half a thousand years. For alongside of the constructive forces that gave rise to the hopes of these epochs there were also destructive forces at work, and these destructive forces, though unnoticed at the time, proved more potent in the end than the constructive.

It may be so with us to-day. Some of our most constructive writers admit this possibility.*

The study of these former epochs is instructive indeed. The Greek or Roman civilization culminated in some of its phases at the period of the Greek enlightenment and in other phases during the Augustinian age. That civilization was characterized, through the earlier part of these centuries especially, with intellectual achievement of the first magnitude, with democratic political institutions not wholly different from some of ours and in commercial activities of great volume and extent. Upon the basis of these, and these alone, boundless hopes might legitimately have been founded; but there were also other forces at work. Among these was a bad distribution of wealth through the Greco-Roman

*See Ross' "Social Control," p. 436; Rauschenbusch's "Christianizing the Social Order," p. 29; Eucken's "The Problem of Human Life," p. 300; Bagley's "Educational Values," p. 61.

world and the breakdown of the family, especially among the Romans. But the most destructive social force of the period was positive individualism. This expressed itself explicitly and with open avowal in Greek philosophy. Epicurianism and Stoicism were both hedonistic at heart, and the Sophists asserted as their central maxim that the individual is the standard and criterion in everything. It manifested itself in the rebellion against convention in Greek morals and the almost universal skepticism as to the authority of duty. All this took a practical form in the excessive personal ambitions and the unrestrained individual competition that prevailed in Greek society, and, what was perhaps worse, between Greek states. As for the Greek religion, it was utterly devoid of any such co-operative ideals as we now possess in Christianity. All this gave rise to centrifugal movements, resulting in the moral and social decadence of the first century, which Rogers, in his history of philosophy, characterizes in the following words:

“The rapidly increasing corruption of the ruling class, the glaring contrasts of luxury and misery, the insecurity of life and property, the sense of world-weariness which marked the passing away of moral enthusiasms, all brought home to man the feeling

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

that the world was growing old and that some moral catastrophe was impending."

But imagine Aristides or Alexander approached with the suggestion that the ancient world was moving toward a dark age. Imagine Pericles or Aristotle, or even Cicero or Cæsar, foreseeing the collapse of ancient civilization. Nevertheless, blind as they were to the facts, these destructive forces were at work, and ultimately brought forth their fruits.

The Renaissance epoch, with the period immediately following, is equally interesting. Dante and half a score of lesser literary geniuses were adding their names to the list of the immortals. The horizon of the earth was being widened by the discovery of the great navigators, and the boundary of the universe was being extended by the great astronomers. Commercial and industrial developments were greater than Europe had ever seen before. And several important inventions had stimulated the imagination of men with the possibilities of applied science. No wonder Moore was inspired by these events to Utopian dreams, and Erasmus hoped for the time when the Golden Rule should dominate diplomacy and government exist for the benefit of the governed.

Nevertheless these bright dreams and alluring

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

promises were doomed to disappointment, and the centuries following were drenched in the blood of peasants' rebellions and religious wars. Religious liberty miscarried, the Reformation degenerated into a brood of warring sects, and rising democracy was crushed under the tyrannous heels of Henry VIII and Charles V.

In casting about for the causes of this disappointment they may be discovered principally in a single fact; viz., the superstitious ignorance of the masses of the common people. This ignorance was the destructive force which successfully held in check for nearly five centuries all the constructive forces upon which the hopes of the age were based. There is always a certain aggregate of forces at work in society, whether in our age or any other. And it stands to reason that while some of these forces are constructive, some also are destructive; and the question may always be legitimately and wisely raised whether the destructive or constructive forces predominate in the balance of power. It is always well to make sane, thoughtful, optimistic investigation of the enemy's position and forces, so as to make sure of victory in the inevitable engagement. It must be admitted, and all wise friends of progress will be willing to admit it, that some of the disinte-

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

grating forces that were operative in these previous epochs are also operative among us to-day.

First may be mentioned the tendency to appraise wealth above life. Numerous manifestations of this phenomenon might be remarked. There is the willingness to fatten the federal fisc at the crib of the liquor interests and pay the bills of the National Government with the miserable forfeitures of drunkenness. There is the glaring inequitableness of our distribution of wealth, which Professor Patton characterizes by asserting that only twenty-five per cent of our population have shared in the benefits of our material progress. There is the terrible toll of industrial accident and disease, and the exploitation of childhood in the interests of gain. All of these manifestations of the accumulation of wealth at the expense of man are brought into even clearer light by the very protest which is being so effectively raised against them of late.

Another evidence of the destructive forces at work in our society is the prevalence of vice and the diseases and death that follow in its wake. Again, there are the disappointments of democratic government displayed in the corrupt dominance of the great financial interest and in the shameful political debauchery of so many of our cities.

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

Again, there is the decreasing fecundity of our native white race, indicated by population statistics. This even raises the question whether our native population may not ultimately be supplanted by descendants of immigrants, and whether the civilization our forefathers have produced can be appreciated and transmitted to the future by alien races such as are now flocking to our shores.

It will be seen that under all these moral phenomena there lies a common cause; viz., the exaggerated individualism of the present age. Individualism as an ethical philosophy is hedonistic. It believes that the purpose of life is pleasure, and that the value of life is to be measured in the amount of pleasure which the individual secures. It can not bear restraints. It suffocates with disappointment. It is egotistical and selfish. It repudiates duties, ignores responsibilities, and seeks to attain its ends without regard to the like ends of others. It interprets personal liberty into license, and refuses to limit freedom by voluntary responsibility.

The individualist has habituated this philosophy of life into his mode of action so thoroughly that the philosophy is not held explicitly but implicitly and subconsciously. The individualist can not brook failure of his plans or miscarriage of his am-

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

bitions. He passes his way but once, and therefore he insists passionately upon plucking the flowers that grow along the way. For he is impressed with the fact that he can never return to gather what he has missed. The individualist is a willful child and a selfish brother, a domineering husband and a tyrannous father, grasping in business, unsympathetic and disobliging as a neighbor, self-centered as a citizen, and self-seeking as a public servant.

It must be conceded that individualism as a subconscious habituated philosophy of life is extremely prevalent among us. And the causes are not far to seek. It is a by-product of the rise of democracy and comes from that one-sided interpretation of democratic principles which emphasizes its benefits, but fails to recognize its responsibilities. It arises also out of the intellectual freedom of the age, the fact that men are no longer under the bonds of dogmatism, but instead, freedom of thought is the motto of the times. By this freedom selfish men are unleashed from the restraints of controlling beliefs and ideals. But principally it is the result of the commercialism of the age and the emphasis that it has laid. Wealth is a means primarily to self-gratification; and in an age especially devoted to wealth-getting, self-gratification is the inevitable conse-

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

quence. Moreover, the sense of power that results from the possession of wealth can not but augment this sentiment. The effects are evident everywhere in the starting up of the screws of duty that hold society together. Individualism is the disease that is giving rise to nearly all of the symptoms of moral decay just enumerated. In addition to these it has generated the current obtuseness of mind relative to the higher spiritual values.

These constitute a sufficiently complete list of the disintegrating forces that are at work in modern society. The similarity to the forces that have blighted former ages is strikingly evident, and they may well receive the thoughtful consideration of serious men and women.

The great medicine needed is a more adequate supply of moral earnestness on the part of all our people. Just as the general ignorance of the masses brought to naught the bright promises of the Renaissance, so the loose moral adjustments of our modern life, as indicated in the preceding paragraphs, are our serious danger. Exaggerated individualism, precisely the same cause that undermined, more than any other, the Greco-Roman civilization, is at work among the foundations of our own civilization. We need a firm socio-personal morality;

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

that is, a personal morality that sees its ends in the general welfare. We need to develop as a motive for this morality a greater volume and intensity of socio-personal religion; that is, a religion that finds its ideals, its enthusiasms, and its motives in the social welfare.

The possibilities along this line have scarcely been realized. It seems entirely practicable to hope that limitless moral resources may be developed here, for without doubt humanity is as religious at heart to-day as in any preceding age. To be sure, religious energy may be latent rather than active, but its occasional almost volcanic local eruptions under the leadership of professional revivalists seems to indicate that it is available. The capacity for faith, spiritual longing, and devotion to religious enterprises is surely as great as ever. If only the souls of our contemporaries could be led to see the divine plan in social relations, and God's law in the moral law, and salvation in the social life, there is no telling what might result in behalf of social betterment.

There is probably more sympathy and altruism in the world per capita than ever before. It could hardly be otherwise, considering the growth of democracy and enlightenment during the past century and a half, and it is evident in the humanitarian

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

movements of the last generation. If only this sympathy and altruism could be utilized as a motive for moral life, if only men could be led to see the dire consequences to their loved ones and to society of vicious lives, this growing sympathy might be utilized for the realization of the Kingdom of God among us.

But above all there is a tremendous amount of social interest and idealism. How else can we account for the almost fanatical display of feeling that seems capable of developing during political campaigns? How else can we account for the growth of socialism and of the labor movement? How else can we explain the tremendously increased interest in the social sciences, the development of philanthropy, and the spread of social religion? If only this social interest and altruism could be attached to the cause of individual moral regeneration, it might lift our nation and our people to a safe moral level, as a raft may be made to lift a sunken derelict out of the sand and mud of a river bottom when the tide comes in.

Such a moral regeneration as this, flowering forth out of the latent religious capacity of the people, out of the growing sympathy of the modern man and the budding social interests, is a regeneration worthy of our day-dreams and our prayers;

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

for day-dreams and prayers may vitally contribute to its actual realization.

Stranger things have happened. We have all read of that great movement of the Middle Ages which marshaled all Western Europe to the enterprise of recapturing the Holy Sepulcher from the infidels. What a display of religious devotion, energy, and sacrifice to a great though mistaken ideal, to a cause supposed to be in the interests of the general welfare! What might it not have accomplished had it been more wisely directed. But does the intelligence, social enthusiasm, and the religious fervor of the modern world aggregate any less than the religious fanaticism of that day? Does the social ideal appeal any less powerfully to the imagination of our day than the Holy Sepulcher appealed to the imagination of that day?

God grant that a crusade commensurate in devotion and enthusiasm to the crusade which sought to rescue the Holy Sepulcher from the Saracens may enlist the devotion and enthusiasm of our modern age, to the end that the infidelity of selfishness and vice may be driven out and the Kingdom of God set up in the midst of our society. May the spirit of Peter the Hermit come again to some humble and fervent prophet from among the common people, a man

Personal Religion and the Social Awakening

who knows the miseries and temptations, the passions and the suffering of the masses as well as that earlier prophet knew the insults and indignities suffered by pilgrims to the Holy Land! May he arouse the common people! May he be able to fire the hearts of the men in Halsted Street and the East Side to enlist in the crusade—a crusade against the vices of their own lives, in behalf of their children, their homes, and the republic! And as the fire he kindles spreads, may some Urban appear among the ecclesiastical leaders, who shall discern the full significance of such a moral and spiritual crusade! May he, before the representatives of the Church assembled at some modern Clermont, take up the message and preach it with an eloquence and persuasiveness that shall move the souls of all who hear him till they shall cry in response: "*Deus vult!* *Deus vult!*" And may this cry echo from council to council, from city to city, from village to village, until it shall reverberate throughout the length and breadth of the land! May the crusade become as universal as was that other crusade of a thousand years ago! For certain it is that God does will it. He wills that the millions of our people whose lives are under the blight of selfishness, sin, vice, and

The Social Need of a Religious Awakening

despair may be regenerated and redeemed. He wills that thereby our civilization shall also be redeemed from the destructive forces that menace it, so that the social dreams and hopes of the twentieth century may be realized and the Kingdom of God may come upon the earth.

A 059201
THE LIBRARY
OF THE CHURCH

Finney, Ross L. (Ross Lee), 1875-1934.
Personal religion and the social
awakening / by Ross L. Finney. --
Cincinnati : Jennings and Graham ; New
York : Eaton and Mains c1913.

147 p. ; 21 cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

**1. Sociology, Christian. 2. Church
and the world. I. Title**

59201

22 JAN 93

4337788 CSTMxc

13-20315

